

SELECT POEMS

TENNYSON & BROWNING

— 1911 —

W. J. ALEXANDER

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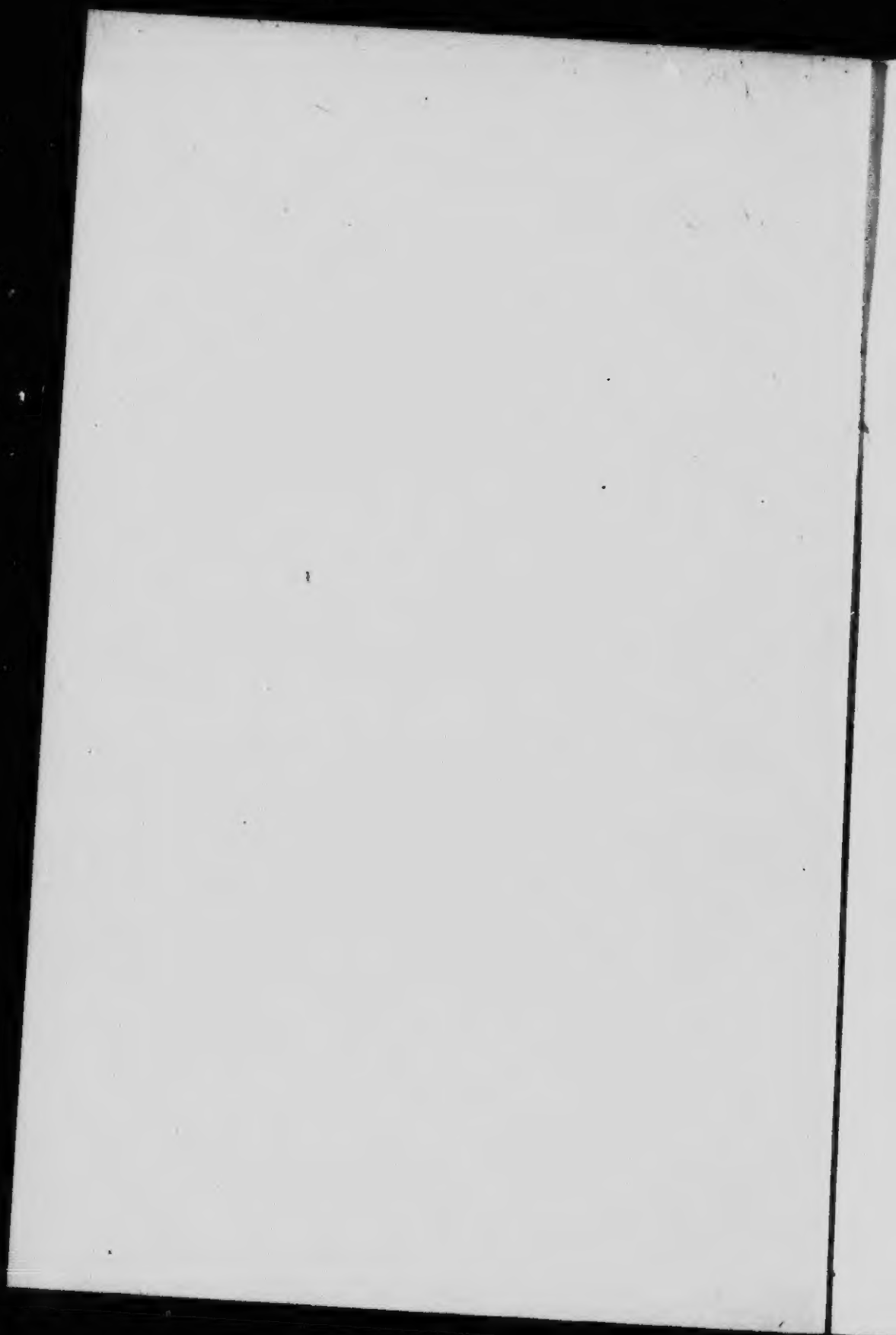
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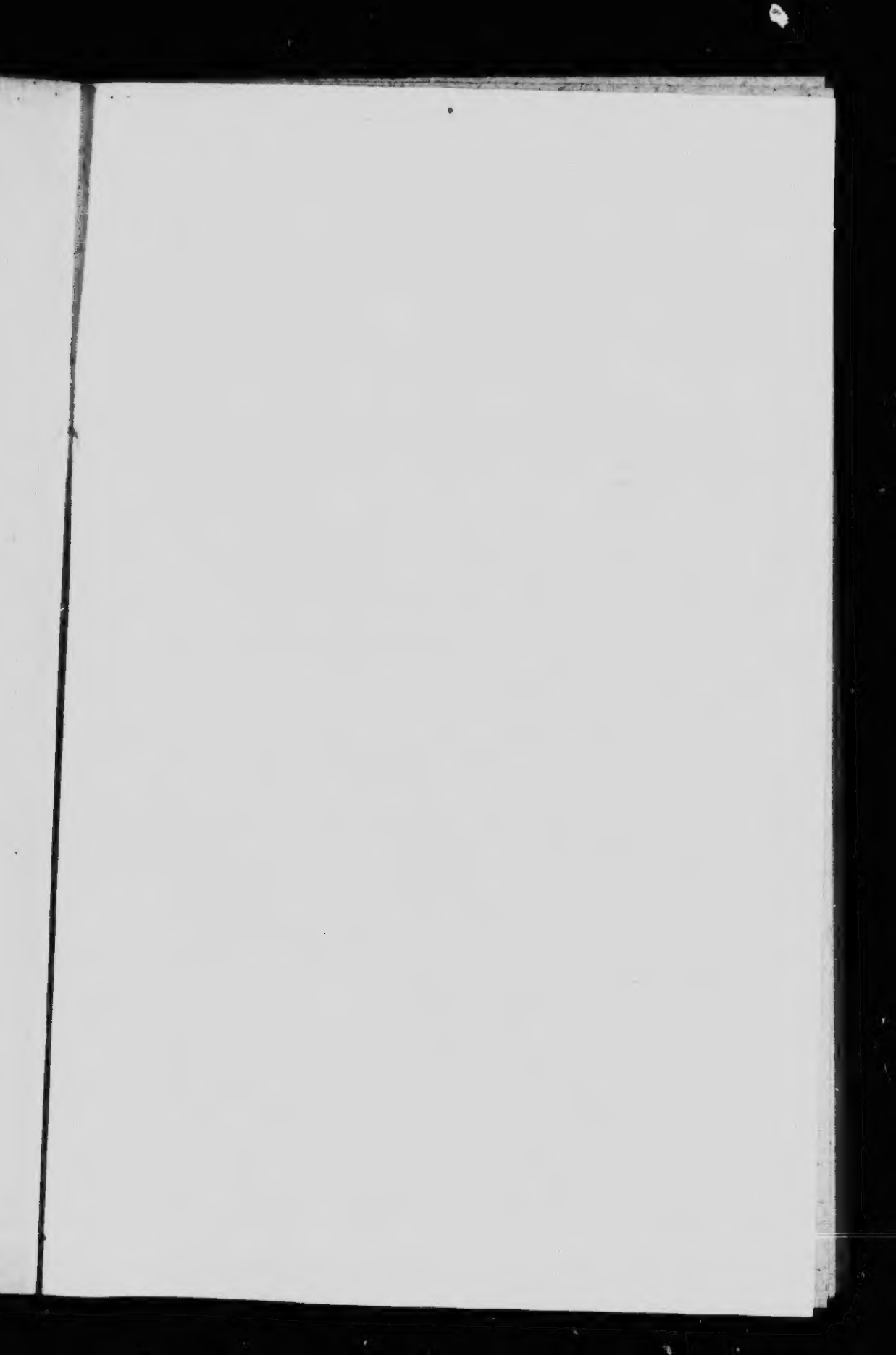
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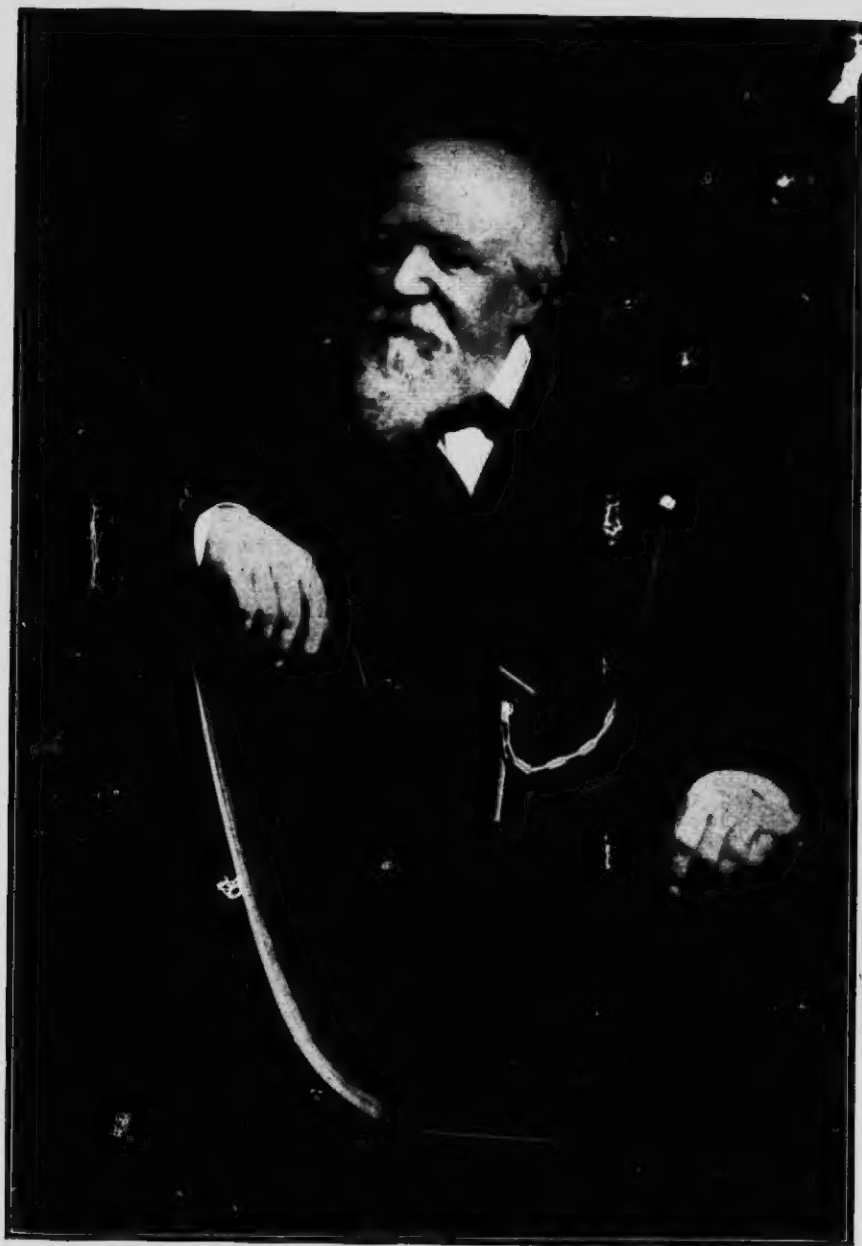
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W. B. Smith







Browning.

SELECT POEMS

PRESCRIBED FOR THE JUNIOR MATRICULATION AND
JUNIOR TEACHERS' EXAMINATIONS,

1911.

EDITED WITH BRIEF NOTES.

BY

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TORONTO:

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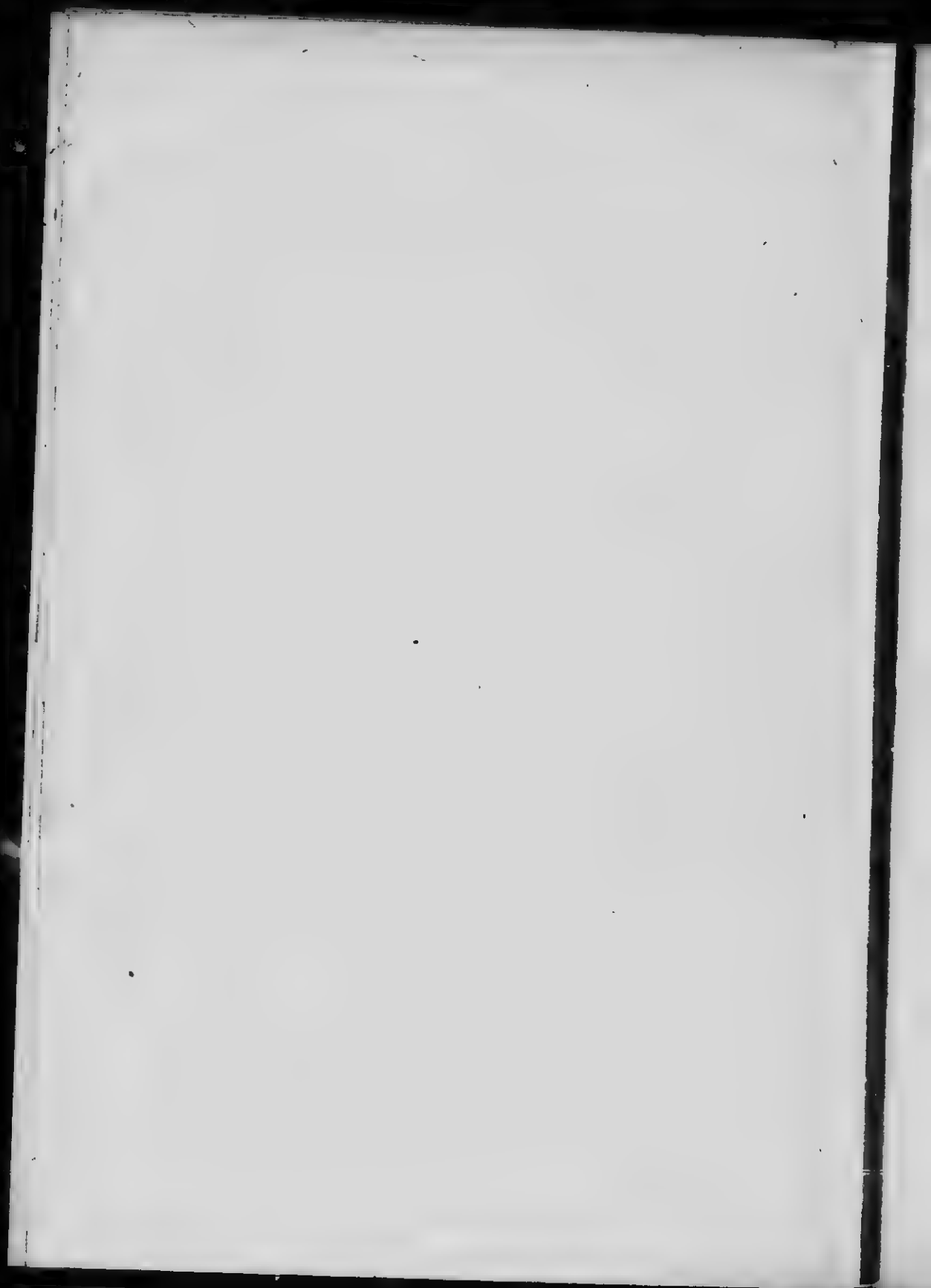
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POEMS.



TENNYSON.

THE POET

The poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above ;
Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love.

He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill, 5
He saw thro' his own soul.
The marvel of the everlasting will,
An open scroll,

Before him lay : with echoing feet he threaded
The secretest walks of fame :
The viewless arrows of his thoughts were headed
And wing'd with flame,

Like Indian reeds blown from his silver tongue,
And of so fierce a flight,
From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung, 15
Filling with light

And vagrant melodies the winds which bore
 Them earthward till they lit ;
 Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field flower,
 The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth anew
Where'er they fell, behold,
Like to the mother plant in semblance, grew
A flower all gold,

25

And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling
The winged shafts of truth,
To throng with stately blooms the breathing spring
Of Hope and Youth.

So many minds did gird their orbs with beams,
 Tho' one did fling the fire.
 Heaven flow'd upon the soul in many dreams
 Of high desire.

30

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the world
 Like one great garden show'd,
 And thro' the wreaths of floating dark upcurl'd
 Rare sunrise flow'd.

35

And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise
 Her beautiful bold brow,
 When rites and forms before his burning eyes
 Melted like snow.

40

There was no blood upon her maiden robes
 Sunn'd by those orient skies;
 But round about the circles of the globes
 Of her keen eyes

And in her raiment's hem was trac'd in flame
 WISDOM, a name to shake
 All evil dreams of power—a sacred name.
 And when she spake,

45

Her words did gather thunder as they ran,
 And as the lightning to the thunder
 Which follows it, riving the spirit of man,
 Making earth wonder,

50

So was their meaning to her words. No sword
 Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,
 But one poor poet's scroll, and with his word
 She shook the world.

55

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

PART I.

On either side the river lie
 Long fields of barley and of rye,
 That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
 And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot; 5
 And up and down the people go,
 Gazing where the lilies blow
 Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver, 10
 Little breezes dusk and shiver
 Thro' the wave that runs for ever
 By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.

Four gray walls, and four gray towers, 15
 Overlook a space of flowers,
 And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
 Slide the heavy barges trail'd 20
 By slow horses; and unhail'd
 The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
 Skimming down to Camelot;

But who hath seen her wave her hand?
 Or at the casement seen her stand? 25
 Or is she known in all the land,
 The Lady of Shalott?

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

Only reapers, reaping early
 In among the bearded barley,
 Hear a song that echoes cheerly
 From the river winding clearly, 30
 Down to tower'd Camelot:
 And by the moon the reaper weary,
 Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
 Listening, whispers 'Tis the fairy
 Lady of Shalott.' 35

PART II.

There she weaves by night and day
 A magic web with colours gay.
 She has heard a whisper say,
 A curse is on her if she stay 40
 To look down to Camelot.
 She knows not what the curse may be,
 And so she weaveth steadily,
 And little other care hath she,
 The Lady of Shalott. 45

And moving thro' a mirror clear
 That hangs before her all the year,
 Shadows of the world appear.
 There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot: 50
 There the river eddy whirls,
 And there the surly village-churls,
 And the red cloaks of market girls,
 Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad, 55
 An abbot on an ambling pad,
 Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,

Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
 Goes by to tower'd Camelot ;
 And sometimes thro' the mirror blue 60
 The knights come riding two and two :
 She hath no loyal knight and true,
 The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
 To weave the mirror's magic sights, 65
 For often thro' the silent nights
 A funeral, with plumes and lights
 And music, went to Camelot :
 Or when the moon was overhead,
 Came two young lovers lately wed ; 70
 'I am half sick of shadows,' said
 The Lady of Shalott.

PART III.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
 He rode between the barley-sheaves,
 The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves, 75
 And flamed upon the brazen greaves
 Of bold Sir Lancelot.

A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
 To a lady in his shield,
 That sparkled on the yellow field, 80
 Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
 Like to some branch of stars we see
 Hung in the golden Galaxy.
 The bridle bells rang merrily 85
 As he rode down to Camelot :

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

90

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.

95

As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd ;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode ;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.

100

From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

105

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.

110

Out flew the web and floated wide ;
The mirror crack'd from side to side ;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

115

PART IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining, 120
Heavily the low sky raining

Over tower'd Camelot ;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote 125
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance 130
Did she look to Camelot.

And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain and down she lay ;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott. 135

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot : 140

And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy, 145
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
 For ere she reach'd upon the tide
 The first house by the water-side,
 Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

150

Under tower and balcony,
 By garden-wall and gallery.
 A gleaming shape she floated by,
 Dead-pale between the houses high,
 Silent into Camelot.

155

Out upon the wharfs they came,
 Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
 And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

160

Who is this? and what is here?
 And in the lighted palace near
 Died the sound of royal cheer;
 And they crossed themselves for fear,
 All the knights at Camelot:

165

But Lancelot mused a little space;
 He said, 'She has a lovely face;
 God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.'

170

CENONE.

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
 Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
 The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
 Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
 And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand 5
 The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
 Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
 The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
 In cataract after cataract to the sea.
 Behind the valley topmost Gargarus 10
 Stands up and takes the morning : but in front
 The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
 Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
 The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon 15
 Mournful Cenone, wandering forlorn
 Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
 Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
 Floated her hair or seemed to float in rest.
 She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine, 20
 Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
 Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 For now the noon-day quiet holds the hill : 25
 The grasshopper is silent in the grass :
 The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
 Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
 The purple flower droops : the golden bee
 Is lily-cradled : I alone awake. 30

My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die. 35
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crown'd snake! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls 40
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather'd shape: for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida, 45
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy dark aloft the mountain pine:
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris, 50
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft:
Far up the solitary morning smote 55
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone: white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin
Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Cluster'd about his temples like a God's: 60
And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

TENNYSON.

11

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.

65

" My own CEnone,
Beautiful-brow'd CEnone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n
' For the most fair,' would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows."

70

75

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added " This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus ; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due :
But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods."

80

85

90

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnight : one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,

95

Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
 Lotus and lilies : and a wind arose,
 And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
 This way and that, in many a wild festoon 100
 Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
 With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
 And o'er him flowed a golden cloud, and lean'd 105
 Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
 Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom
 Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
 Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
 Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made 110
 Proffer of royal power, ample rule
 Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue
 Wherewith to embellish state, "from many a vale
 And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,
 Or labour'd mine undrainable of ore. 115
 Honour," she said, "and homage, tax and toll,
 From many an inland town and haven large,
 Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
 In glassy bays among her tallest towers."

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die. 120
 Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
 "Which in all action is the end of all ;
 Power fitted to the season ; wisdom-bred
 And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
 Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand 125
 Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
 From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born,
 A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
 Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power

TENNYSON.

13

Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
Rest in a happy place, and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy."

130

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Cut at arm's-length, so much the thought of power
Flatter'd his spirit ; but Pallas where she stood
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs

135

O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

140

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear ;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

145

150

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

Again she said : " I woo thee not with gifts.
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest.

155

Yet, indeed,

If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbias'd by self-profit, oh ! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,

160

Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
 To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
 Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
 Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will, 165
 Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
 Commeasure perfect freedom."

' Here she ceas'd,
 And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, "O Paris,
 Give it to Pallas!" but he heard me not, 170
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

' O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells, 175
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew
 From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
 Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
 And shoulder: from the violets her light foot
 Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form 180
 Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
 The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh, 185
 Half-whisper'd in his ear, "I promise thee
 The fairest and most loving wife in Greece,"
 She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for fear:
 But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
 And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes, 190
 As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
 And I was left alone within the bower;
 And from that time to this I am alone,
 And I shall be alone until I die.

'Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.

195

Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?

My love hath told me so a thousand times.

Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,

When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,

Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail

200

Crouch'd fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?

Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms

Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest

Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew

Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains

205

Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.

They came, they cut away my tallest pines,

My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge

High over the blue gorge, and all between

210

The snowy peak and snow-white cataract

Foster'd the callow eaglet—from beneath

Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn

The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat

Low in the valley. Never, never more

215

Shall lone Ænone see the morning mist

Sweep thro' them; never see them over-laid

With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,

Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.

220

I wish that somewhere in the ruin'd folds,

Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,

Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her

The Abominable, that uninvited came

Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,

225

And cast the golden fruit upon the board,

And bred this change ; that I might speak my mind,
 And tell her to her face how much I hate
 Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die. 230
 Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
 In this green valley, under this green hill,
 Ev’n on this hand, and sitting on this stone ?
 Seal’d it with kisses ? water’d it with tears ?
 O happy tears, and how unlike to these ! 235
 O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face ?
 O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight ?
 O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
 There are enough unhappy on this earth,
 Pass by the happy souls, that love to live : 240
 I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
 And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
 Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
 Weigh heavy on my eyelids : let me die.

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die. 245
 I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
 Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
 Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
 Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
 Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see 250
 My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
 Conjectures of the features of her child
 Ere it is born : her child !—a shudder comes
 Across me : never child be born of me,
 Unblest, to vex me with his father’s eyes ! 255

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 Hear me, O earth, I will not die alone,
 Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me

Walking the cold and starless road of Death
 Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
 With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
 Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
 Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
 A fire dances before her, and a sound
 Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
 What this may be I know not, but I know
 That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
 All earth and air seem only burning fire.'

260

265

THE EPIC.

At Francis Allen's on the Christmas-eve,—
 The game of forfeits done—the girls all kiss'd
 Beneath the sacred bush and past away—
 The parson Holmes, the poet Everard Hall,
 The host, and I sat round the wassail-bowl, 5
 Then half-way ebb'd : and there we held a talk,
 How all the old honour had from Christmas gone,
 Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd games
 In some odd nooks like this ; till I, tired out
 With cutting eights that day upon the pond, 10
 Where, three times slipping from the outer edge,
 I bump'd the ice into three several stars,
 Fell in a doze ; and half-awake I heard
 The parson taking wide and wider sweeps,
 Now harping on the church-commissioners, 15
 Now hawking at Geology and schism ;
 Until I woke, and found him settled down
 Upon the general decay of faith
 Right thro' the world, 'at home was little left,
 And none abroad : there was no anchor, none, 20
 To hold by.' Francis, laughing, clapt his hand
 On Everard's shoulder, with 'I hold by him.'
 'And I,' quoth Everard, 'by the wassail-bowl.'
 'Why yes,' I said, 'we knew your gift that way
 At college : but another which you had, 25
 I mean of verse (for so we held it then),
 What came of that?' 'You know,' said Frank, 'he burnt
 His epic, his King Arthur, some twelve books'—
 And then to me demanding why? 'Oh, sir,
 He thought that nothing new was said, or else 30
 Something so said 'twas nothing—that a truth

Looks freshest in the fashion of the day :
 God knows : he has a mint of reasons : ask.
 It pleased *me* well enough.' 'Nay, nay,' said Hall,
 'Why take the style of those heroic times ? 35
 For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
 Nor we those times ; and why should any man
 Remodel models ? these twelve books of mine
 Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing-worth,
 Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt.' 'But I,' 40
 Said Francis, 'pick'd the eleventh from this hearth
 And have it : keep a thing, its use will come.
 I hoard it as a sugar-plum for Holmes.'
 He laugh'd, and I, tho' sleepy, like a horse
 That hears the corn-bin open, prick'd my ears ; 45
 For I remember'd Everard's college fame
 When we were Freshmen : then at my request
 He brought it ; and the poet little urged,
 But with some prelude of disparagement,
 Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and aes, 50
 Deep-chested music, and to this result.

 MORTE D'ARTHUR.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
 Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
 Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
 Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,
 King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep, 5
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
 Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,

That stood on a dark strait of barren land. 10
 On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
 Lay a great water, and the moon was full.
 Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
 'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights 15
 Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
 They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
 Shall never more, at any future time,
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
 Walking about the gardens and the halls 20
 Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
 I perish by this people which I made,—
 Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
 To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
 I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm 25
 That without help I cannot last till morn.
 Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
 Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
 In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
 Rose up from out the bosom of the lake, 30
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
 And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
 And, wheresoever I am sung or told
 In aftertime, this also shall be known : 35
 But now delay not : take Excalibur,
 And fling him far into the middle mere :
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'
 To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
 'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus, 40
 Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
 A little thing may harm a wounded man.
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,

Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept 45
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock, 50
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt : 55
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind, 60
In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King. 65

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave ?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, 70
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as besem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight : 75
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.

This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
 Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
 As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
 I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.' 80
 Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
 Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
 Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
 But when he saw the wonder of the hilt, 85
 How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
 His palms together, and he cried aloud,
 'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
 Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
 Should thus be lost for ever from the earth, 90
 Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
 What good should follow this, if this were done?
 What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
 Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
 Were it well to obey then, if a king demand 95
 An act unprofitable, against himself?
 The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
 What record, or what relic of my lord
 Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
 And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept, 100
 Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
 Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
 Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
 Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
 Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps 105
 Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
 So might some old man speak in the aftertime
 To all the people, winning reverence.
 But now much honour and much fame were lost.'
 So spake he, clouded with his own conceit, 110
 And hid Excalibur the second time,

And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :

'What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere : 115

'I heard the water lapping on the crag,

And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :

'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,

Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me ! 120

Authority forgets a dying king,

Laid widow'd of the power in his eye

'That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,

For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,

In whom should meet the offices of all, 125

Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;

Either from lust of gold, or like a girl

Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.

Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,

And the third time may prosper, get thee hence : 130

But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,

I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,

And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged

Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword, 135

And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand

Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,

And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,

Seen where the moving isles of winter shock 140

By night, with noises of the northern sea.

So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :

But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 145

Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
' Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.

Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ?" 150

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :

' Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men, 155
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 160
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
' My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.

Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear 165
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere 170

Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders draw the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs. 175

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, ' Quick, quick !

I fear it is too late and I shall die.' 180

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.

He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him, like a goad. 185

Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels— 190

And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware 195

That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,

And, as it were one voice an agony 200
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills

All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge,'
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens 205
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.

But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud, 210

And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon

Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
 And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops 215
 Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
 That made his forehead like a rising sun
 High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust ;
 Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
 Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips. 220
 So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
 From spur to plume a star of tournament,
 Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
 Before the eyes of ladies and of kings. 225

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
 ' Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
 Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
 For now I see the true old times are dead,
 When every morning brought a noble chance, 230
 And every chance brought out a noble knight.
 Such times have been not since the light that led
 The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
 But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
 Which was an image of the mighty world ; 235
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,
 And the days darken round me, and the years,
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge :
 ' The old order changeth, yielding place to new, 240
 And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
 Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done
 May He within Himself make pure ! but thou, 245
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats 250
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God. 255
 But now farewell. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
 To the island-valley of Avilion;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, 260
 Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'
 So said he, and the barge with oar and sail 265
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
 That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
 Revolving many memories, till the hull 270
 Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
 And on the mere the wailing died away.

Here ended Hull, and our last light, that long
 Had wink'd and threaten'd darkness, flared and fell:
 At which the Parson, sent to sleep with sound, 275
 And waked with silence, grunted 'Good!' but we
 Sat rapt: it was the tone with which he read—
 Perhaps some modern touches here and there
 Redeem'd it from the charge of nothingness—

Or else we loved the man, and prized his work ; 280
 I know not : but we sitting, as I said,
 The cock crew loud ; as at that time of year
 The lusty bird takes every hour for dawn :
 Then Francis, muttering, like a man ill-used,
 'There now—that's nothing!' drew a little back, 285
 And drove his heel into the smoulder'd log,
 That sent a blast of sparkles up the flue :
 And so to bed ; where yet in sleep I seem'd
 To sail with Arthur under looming shores,
 Point after point ; till on to dawn, when dreams 290
 Begin to feel the truth and stir of day,
 To me, methought, who waited with a crowd,
 There came a bark that, blowing forward, bore
 King Arthur, like a modern gentleman
 Of stateliest port ; and all the people cried, 295
 'Arthur is come again : he cannot die.'
 Then those that stood upon the hills behind
 Repeated—'Come again, and thrice as fair ;'
 And, further inland, voices echo'd—'Come
 With all good things, and war shall be no more.' 300
 At this a hundred bells began to peal,
 That with the sound I woke, and heard indeed
 The clear church-bells ring in the Christmas-morn.

ST. AGNES' EVE

Deep on the convent-roof the snows
 Are sparkling to the moon :
 My breath to heaven like vapour goes :
 May my soul follow soon !
 The shadows of the convent-towers 5
 Slant down the snowy sward,
 Still creeping with the creeping hours
 That lead me to my Lord :
 Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
 As are the frosty skies, 10
 Or this first snowdrop of the year
 That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
 To yonder shining ground ;
 As this pale taper's earthly spark, 15
 To yonder argent round ;
 So shows my soul before the Lamb,
 My spirit before Thee ;
 So in mine earthly house I am,
 To that I hope to be. 20
 Break up the heavens, O Lord ! and far,
 Thro' all yon starlight keen,
 Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
 In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors ; 25
 The flashes come and go ;
 All heaven bursts her starry floors,
 And strows her lights below,
 And deepens on and up ! the gates
 Roll back, and far within 30

For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
 To make me pure of sin,
 The sabbaths of Eternity,
 One sabbath deep and wide—
 A light upon the shining sea—
 The Bridegroom with his bride!

35

“BREAK, BREAK, BREAK”

Break, break, break,
 On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
 And I would that my tongue could utter
 The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
 That he shouts with his sister at play!
 O well for the sailor lad,
 That he sings in his boat on the bay!

5

And the stately ships go on
 To their haven under the hill;
 But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
 And the sound of a voice that is still!

10

Break, break, break,
 At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead
 Will never come back to me.

15

THE VOYAGE

I.

We left behind the painted buoy
 That tosses at the harbour-mouth;
 And madly danced our hearts with joy,
 As fast we fled to the South:

THE VOYAGE.

31

How fresh was every sight and sound
On open main or winding shore !
We knew the merry world was round,
And we might sail for evermore.

5

II.

Warm broke the breeze against the brow,
Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail :
The Lady's-head upon the prow
Caught the shrill salt, and sheer'd the gale.
The broad seas swell'd to meet the keel,
And swept behind ; so quick the run,
We felt the good ship shake and reel,
We seem'd to sail into the Sun !

10

15

III.

How oft we saw the Sun retire,
And burn the threshold of the night,
Fall from his Ocean-lane of fire,
And sleep beneath his pillar'd light !
How oft the purple-skirted robe
Of twilight slowly downward drawn,
As thro' the slumber of the globe
Again we dash'd into the dawn !

20

IV.

New stars all night above the brim
Of waters lighten'd into view ;
They climb'd as quickly, for the rim
Changed every moment as we flew.
Far ran the naked moon across
The houseless ocean's heaving field,
Or flying shone, the silver boss
Of her own halo's dusky shield ;

25

30

V.

The peaky islet shifted shapes,
 High towns on hills were dimly seen,
 We past long lines of Northern capes 35
 And dewy Northern meadows green.
 We came to warmer waves, and deep
 Across the boundless east we drove.
 Where those long swells of breaker sweep
 The nutmeg rocks and isles of clove. 40

VI.

By peaks that flamed, or, all in shade,
 Gloom'd the low coast and quivering brine
 With ashy rains, that spreading made
 Fantastic plume or sable pine;
 By sands and steaming flats, and floods 45
 Of mighty mouth, we scudded fast,
 And hills and scarlet-mingled woods
 Glow'd for a moment as we past.

VII.

O hundred shores of happy climes,
 How swiftly stream'd ye by the bark! 50
 At times the whole sea burn'd, at times
 With wakes of fire we tore the dark;
 At times a carven craft would shoot
 From havens hid in fairy bowers,
 With naked limbs and flowers and fruit, 55
 But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.

VIII.

For one fair Vision ever fled
 Down the waste waters day and night,
 And still we follow'd where she led,
 In hope to gain upon her flight. 60

Her face was evermore unseen,
 And fixt upon the far sea-line;
 But each man murmur'd, 'O my Queen,
 I follow til' I make thee mine.'

IX.

And now we lost her, now she gleam'd 65
 Like Fancy made of golden air,
 Now nearer to the prow she seem'd
 Like Virtue firm, like Knowledge fair,
 Now high on waves that idly burst
 Like Heavenly Hope she crown'd the sea, 70
 And now, the bloodless point reversed,
 She bore the blade of Liberty.

X.

And only one among us—him
 We pleased not—he was seldom pleased:
 He saw not far: his eyes were dim: 75
 But ours he swore were all diseased.
 'A ship of fools,' he shriek'd in spite,
 'A ship of fools,' he sneer'd and wept.
 And overboard one stormy night
 He cast his body, and on we swept. 80

XI.

And never sail of ours was furl'd,
 Nor anchor dropt at eve or morn;
 We lov'd the glories of the world,
 But laws of nature were our scorn.
 For blasts would rise and rave and cease, 85
 But whence were those that drove the sail
 Across the whirlwind's heart of peace,
 And to and thro' the counter-gale?

XII.

Again to colder climes we came,
 For still we follow'd where she led : 90
 Now mate is blind and captain lame,
 And half the crew are sick or dead,
 But, blind or lame or sick or sound,
 We follow that which flies before :
 We know the merry world is round, 95
 And we may sail for evermore.

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ

All along the valley, stream that flashest white,
 Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,
 All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
 I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.
 All along the valley, while I walk'd to-day, 5
 The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away ;
 For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,
 Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
 And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,
 The voice of the dead was a living voice to me. 10

BROWNING.

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now : Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said 5
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there ; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek : perhaps 15
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat : " such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough 20
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed : she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast, 25
The dropping of the daylight in the West,

The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but
thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. O sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands; 45
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence 50
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, 55
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

CAVALIER TUNES

I. MARCHING ALONG.

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,
 Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
 And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
 And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
 Marched them along, fifty-score strong, 5
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
 To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!
 Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
 Hands from the pasty, nor bite take, nor sup, 10
 Till you're—

CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!*

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
 Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry, as well!
 England, good cheer! Rupert is near! 15
 Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,

CHO.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!*

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
 Hold by the right, you double your might; 20
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHO.—*March we along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!*

II. GIVE A ROUSE.

King Charles, and who'll do him right now !
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now !
 Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles !

Who gave me the goods that went since ?
 Who raised me the house that sank once ?
 Who helped me to gold I spent since ?
 Who found me in wine you drank once ?

5

CHO.—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles !

10

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
 By the old fool's side that begot him ?
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him ?

15

CHO.—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles !

20

III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !
 Rescue my castle before the hot day
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray.

CHO.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say ;
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
 " God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—

5

CHO.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "*

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS," ETC. 39

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array: 10
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHO.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
I've better counsellors; what counsel they? 15

CHO.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS
FROM GHENT TO AIX"

16—.

I.

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts
undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest, 5
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our
place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right, 10
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'T was noonset at starting ; but while we drew near
 Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
 At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ; 15
 At Düffeld. 't was morning as plain as could be ;
 And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
 chime,
 So Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time ! "

IV.

At Aershot up leaped of a sudden the sun,
 And against him the cattle stood black every one, 20
 To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
 And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
 With resolute shoulders, each butting away
 The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent
 back 25
 For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
 And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
 O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
 And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
 His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, " Stay spur !
 Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
 We'll remember at Aix "—for one heard the quick
 wheeze
 Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
 knees,
 And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank, 35
 As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like
 chaff; 40
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

VIII.

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight 45
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, 50
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or
 good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round 55
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from
 Ghent. 60

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

I.

Oh, to be in England
 Now that April's there,
 And whoever wakes in England
 Sees, some morning, unaware,
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf 5
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
 In England—now!

II.

And after April, when May follows,
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows! 10
 Here, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
 Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
 That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over
 Lest you should think he never could recapture 15
 The first fine careless rapture!
 And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
 The buttercups, the little children's dower
 —Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower! 20

ANDREA DEL SARTO

(CALLED THE "FAULTLESS PAINTER")

But do not let us quarrel any more,
 No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear, 5
 Treat his own subject after his own way,

Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
 And shut the money into this small hand
 When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
 Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love! 10
 I often am much wearier than you think,
 This evening more than usual, and it seems
 As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
 Here by the window with your hand in mine
 And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole, 15
 Both of one mind, as married people use,
 Quietly, quietly the evening through,
 I might get up to-morrow to my work
 Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
 To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this! 20
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
 And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
 Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
 For each of the five pictures we require:
 It saves a model. So! keep looking so— 25
 My, serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
 —How could you ever prick those perfect ears.
 Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
 My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
 Which everybody looks on and calls his, 30
 And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
 While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
 You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
 There's what we painters call our harmony!
 A common grayness silvers everything,— 35
 All in a twilight, you and I alike
 —You, at the point of your first pride in me
 (That's gone, you know),—but I, at every point;
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40

There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;
The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything. 45
Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead ; 50
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are !
I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us ! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art, 55
But you can hear at least when people speak :
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love ! so such thing should be—
Behold Madonna !—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know, 60
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week, 65
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it !
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past :
I do what many dream of all their lives,
—Dream ? strive to do, and agonize to do, 70
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared

Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
 (I know his name, no matter) —so much less!
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,
 In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain, 80
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough, 85
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world
 My works are nearer heaven but I sit here.
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
 I, painting from myself and to myself, 90
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
 His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
 Rightly traced and well-ordered; what of that? 95
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
 Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray
 Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
 I know both what I want and what might gain, 100
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
 "Had I been two, another and myself,
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
 Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
 The Urbinate, who died five years ago. 105
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,

Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
 Above and through his art—for it gives way ; 110
 That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
 Its body, so to speak : its soul is right,
 He means right—that, a child may understand.
 Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it : 115
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
 Out of me, out of me ! And wherefore out ?
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you !
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think— 120
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.
 But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare— 125
 Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
 "God and the glory ! never care for gain.
 The present by the future, what is that ?
 Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo ! 130
 Rafael is waiting : up to God, all three !"
 I might have done it for you. So it seems :
 Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
 Besides, incentives come from the soul's self ;
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you ? 135
 What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo ?
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not ;
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :
 Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
 'T is safer for me, if the award be strict,

That I am something underrated here,
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day, 145
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
 The best is when they pass and look aside;
 But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
 Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau! 150
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
 In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile, 155
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls 160
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
 This in the background, waiting on my work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward!
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days? 165
 And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
 'T is done and past; 't was right, my instinct said;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. 170
 How could it end in any other way?
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.
 The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, 175
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!

"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife"—
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge 180
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . . 185
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)
 "Friend, there's a certain sbrry little scrub
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190
 Who, were he set to plan and execute
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
 To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see, 195
 Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
 Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
 (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
 Do you forget already words like those?) 200
 If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
 Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
 This hour has been an hour Another smile?
 If you would sit thus by me every night 205
 I should work better, do you comprehend?
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
 See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
 Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210

Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
 Inside the melancholy little house
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.
 King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, 215
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick
 Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
 That gold of his I did cement them with!
 Let us but love each other. Must you go?
 That Cousin here again? he waits outside? 220
 Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans!
 More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
 Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
 While hand and eye and something of a heart
 Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth? 225
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
 The gray remainder of the evening out,
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
 How I could paint, were I but back in France,
 One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face, 230
 Not yours this time! I want you at my side
 To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
 I take the subjects for his corridor, 235
 Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
 And throw him in another thing or two
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
 What's better and what's all I care about, 240
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
 The Cousin! what does he to please you more!

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
 I regret little, I would change still less. 245
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
 The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
 My father and my mother died of want. 250
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
 And I have laboured somewhat in my time
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son 255
 Paint my too hundred pictures—let him try!
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
 You loved me quite enough, it seems, to-night.
 This must suffice me here. What would one have?
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance— 260
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo, and me
 To cover—the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So—still they overcome, 265
 Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

 Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

I.

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
 The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
 Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

II.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least !
 There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast ; 5
 While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a
 beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn of a bull
 Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull !
 —I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned
 wool. 10

IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses ! Why ?
 They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to
 take the eye !
 Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry ;
 You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries
 by ;
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun
 gets high ; 15
 And the shops with fanciful signs, which are painted properly.

V.

What of a villa ? Though winter be over in March by rights,
 'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off
 the heights :
 You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen
 steam and wheeze,
 And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive-
 trees. 20

VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;
 In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
 'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers
 well,
 The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
 Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick
 and sell. 25

VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and
 splash!
 In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foambows
 flash
 On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle
 and pash
 Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not abash,
 Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a
 sort of a sash! 30

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you
 linger,
 Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted fore-
 finger.
 Some think fire-flies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and
 mingle,
 Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
 Late August or early September, the stunning cicada is shrill, 35
 And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous
 firs on the hill.
 Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever
 and chill.

IX.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells
begin :

No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in :

You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin. 40

By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood,
draws teeth ;

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.

At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping
hot !

And a notice how, only this morning three liberal thieves
were shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes, 45

And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new
law of the Duke's !

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so,

Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome and Cicero,

"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) "the skirts of
Saint Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous
than ever he preached." 50

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our Lady borne
smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck
in her heart !

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-to-tootle* the fife ;

No keeping one's haunches still : it's the greatest pleasure in
life.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear ! fowls, wine, at double the
the rate. 55

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays
passing the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!
 Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still—ah, the pity, the
 pity!

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls
 and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow
 candles; 60

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with
 handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better pre-
 ventation of scandals:

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-to-tootle* the fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

I.

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles,
 Miles and miles

On the solitary pastures where our sheep,
 Half-asleep,

Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop 5
 As they crop—

Was the site once of a city great and gay,
 (So they say)

Of our country's very capital, its prince 10
 Ages since

Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
 Peace or war.

II.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
 As you see,

To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills 15
 From the hills

Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
 Into one,) 20
 Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
 Up like fires
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
 Bounding all,
 Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
 Twelve abreast.

III.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass 25
 Never was !
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
 And embeds
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone— 30
 Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
 Long ago ;
 Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
 Struck them tame :
 And that glory and that shame alike, the gold 35
 Bought and sold.

IV.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,
 By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overscored, 40
 While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
 Through the chinks—
 Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
 Sprang sublime,
 And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced 45
 As they raced,
 And the monarch and his minions and his dames
 Viewed the games.

V.

And I know, while thus the quiet colored eve
 Smiles to leave 50
 To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
 In such peace,
 And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
 Melt away—
 That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair 55
 Waits me there
 In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
 For the goal,
 When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless,
 dumb
 Till I come. 60

VI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,
 All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
 Colonnades,
 All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then, 65
 All the men !
 When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
 Either hand
 On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
 Of my face, 70
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
 Each on each.

VII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
 South and North,
 And they built their gods a brazen pillar high 75
 As the sky,

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

57

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course !
Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns !
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin !
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest !
Love is best.

80

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

A PICTURE AT FANO

I.

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

5

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

10

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low

15

Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
 And lift them up to pray, and gently tether 20
 Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garments spread ?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
 My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
 Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
 Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands, 25
 Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
 Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
 And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !
 I think how I should view the earth and skies 30
 And sea, when once again my brow was bared
 After thy healing, with such different eyes.
 O world, as God has made it ! All is beauty :
 And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
 What further may be sought for or declared ? 35

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
 (Alfred, dear friend !)—that little child to pray,
 Holding the little hands up, each to each
 Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
 Over the earth where so much lay before him 40
 Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
 And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
 To sit and see him in his chapel there,
 And drink his beauty to our soul's content 45
 —My angel with me too : and since I care

For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

VIII.

And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

60

55

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH,
THE ARAB PHYSICIAN

Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapor from his mouth, man's soul)
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapor fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with
peace)

5

10

15

Three samples of true snakestone—rarer still,
 One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
 (But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
 And writeth now the twenty-second time. 20

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
 Thus I resume. Who, studious in our art,
 Shall count a little labor unrepaid?
 I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
 On many a flinty furlong of this land. 25

Also, the country-side is all on fire
 With rumors of a marching hitherward:
 Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
 A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;
 Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls: 30
 I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.

Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
 And once a town declared me for a spy;
 But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,

Since this poor covert where I pass the night, 35
 This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
 A man with plague-sores at the third degree
 Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here!

'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
 To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip 40
 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.

A viscid choler is observable
 In tertians, I was nearly bold to say;

And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
 Than our school wots of; there's a spider here 45

Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
 Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back;
 Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his
 mind,

The Syrian runagate I trust this to?

His service payeth me a sublimate
 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
 Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
 There set in order my experiences,
 Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
 Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth 55
 Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
 Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
 In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
 Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
 Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar— 60
 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
 Protesteth his devotion is my price—
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal ?
 I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush, 65
 What set me off a-writing first of all.
 An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang !
 For, be it this town's barrenness—or else
 The Man had something in the look of him—
 His case has struck me far more than 't is worth. 70
 So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose,
 In the great press of novelty at hand,
 The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
 I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind.
 Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth ? 75
 The very man is gone from me but now,
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all !

'T is but a case of mania—subinduced
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point 80
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days :
 When, by the exhibition of some drug

Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
 Unknown to me and which 't were well to know,
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once 85
 Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
 But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
 Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
 The first conceit that entered might inscribe
 Whatever it was minded on the wall 90
 So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
 (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
 Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
 The just-returned and new-established soul
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart 95
 That henceforth she will read or these or none.
 And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
 That he was dead (in fact, they buried him)
 —That he was dead, and then restored to life
 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe : 100
 —'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.
 "Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
 Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,
 Instead of giving way to time and health,
 Should eat itself into the life of life, 105
 As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones, and all!
 For see, how he takes up the after-life.
 The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
 Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
 The body's habit wholly laudable, 110
 As much, indeed, beyond the common health
 As he were made and put aside to show.
 Think, could we penetrate by any drug
 And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
 And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep! 115
 Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?

This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
 Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
 Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
 To bear my inquisition. While they spoke, 120
 Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
 He listened not except I spoke to him,
 But folded his two hands and let them talk,
 Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no fool.
 And that's a sample how his years must go. 125
 Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
 Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
 With straightened habits and with tastes starved small,
 And take at once to his impoverished brain
 The sudden element that changes things, 130
 That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand
 And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?
 Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
 Warily parsimonious, when no need,
 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ? 135
 All prudent counsel as to what befits
 The golden mean, is lost on such an one :
 The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
 So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,
 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty— 140
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven :
 The man is witless of the size, the sum,
 The value in proportion of all things,
 Or whether it be little or be much. 145
 Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
 Assembled to besiege his city now,
 And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
 'T is one ! Then take it on the other side,
 Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt 150

With stupor at its very littleness,
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed
 He caught prodigious import, whole results ;
 And so will turn to us the bystanders
 In ever the same stupor (note this point) 155
 That we too see not with his opened eyes.
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.
 Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness, 160
 Or pretermission of the daily craft!
 While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
 At play or in the school or laid asleep
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,
 Exasperation, just as like. Demand 165
 The reason why—" 't is but a word," object—
 "A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord,
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
 Looked at us (dost thou mind ?) when, being young
 We both would unadvisedly recite 170
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike
 Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both 175
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
 (It is the life to lead perforcedly)
 Which runs across some vast distracting orb 180
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
 The spiritual life around the earthly life :
 The law of that is known to him as this,

His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here. 185
 So is the man perplex with impulses
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
 Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
 And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
 "It should be" balked by "here it cannot be." 190
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face
 As if he saw again and heard again.
 His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.
 Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
 Admonishes: then back he sinks at once 195
 To ashes, who was very fire before,
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,
 Professedly the faultier that he knows 200
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
 Indeed the especial marking of the man
 Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last 205
 For that same death which must restore his being
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul
 Divorced even now by premature full growth:
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
 So long as God please, and just how God please. 210
 He even seeketh not to please God more
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
 Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
 The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do: 215
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
 His own conviction? Ardent as he is—
 Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old

"Be it as God please" reassureth him.
 I probed the sore as thy disciple should : 220
 "How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?"
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me. 225
 The man is apathetic, you deduce?
 Contariwise, he loves both old and young,
 Able and weak, affects the very brutes
 And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—
 As a wise workman recognizes tools 230
 In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:
 Only impatient, let him do his best,
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
 An indignation, which is promptly curbed : 235
 As when in certain travel I have feigned
 To be an ignoramus in our art,
 According to some preconceived design,
 And happed to hear the land's practitioners,
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance, 240
 Prattle fantastically on disease,
 Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
 Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source, 245
 Conferring with the frankness that befits?
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,
 Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule 250
 And creed prodigious as described to me

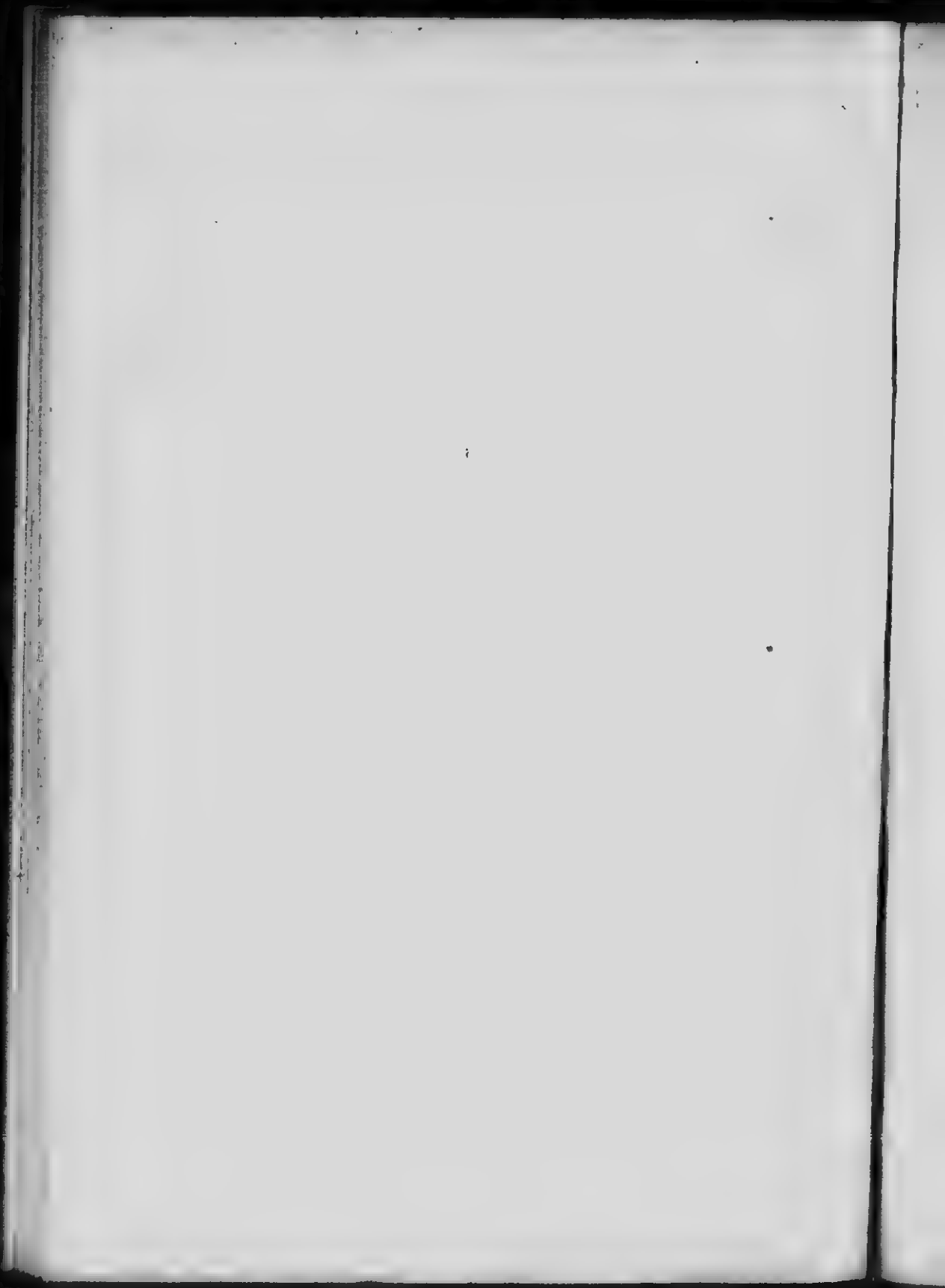
His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
 (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
 To occult learning in our lord the sage
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone) 255
 Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont!
 On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
 To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
 How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way!
 The other imputations must be lies: 260
 But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
 In mere respect for any good man's fame.
 (And after all our patient Lazarus
 Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?
 Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech 265
 'T is well to keep back nothing of a case.)
 This man so cured regards the curer, then,
 As—God forgive me! who but God himself,
 Creator and sustainer of the world,
 That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile! 270
 —'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know.
 And yet was . . . what I said, nor choose repeat,
 And must have so avouched himself, in fact, 275
 In hearing of this very Lazarus
 Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?
 Why write of trivial matters, things of price
 Calling at every moment for remark?
 I noticed on the margin of a pool 280
 Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
 Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!
 Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
 Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
 Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth! 285

Nor I myself discern in what is writ
 Good cause for the peculiar interest
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
 Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus: 290
 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills,
 Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
 A moon made like a face with certain spots
 Multiform, manifold, and menacing:
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met 295
 In this old sleepy town at unaware,
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
 To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good. 300
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;
 Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too— 305
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
 Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
 Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,
 But love I gave thee, with myself to love, 310
 And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
 The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

PROSPICE

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm, 5
The post of the foe ;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go :
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall, 10
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last !
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and
forbore, 15
And bade me creep past.
No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold. 20
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain, 25
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest !



NOTES ON TENNYSON.

ALFRED TENNYSON was the third son of the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, rector of Somersby, a small village in Lincolnshire not far from the sea-coast. Though in the neighbourhood of the fen country, Somersby itself lies "in a pretty pastoral district of sloping hills and large ash trees." "To the north rises the long peak of the wold, with its steep white road that climbs the hill above Thetford; to the south, the land slopes gently to a small deep-channelled brook, which rises not far from Somersby and flows just below the parsonage garden." The scenery of his native village and its neighbourhood, where he spent his youth and early manhood,—the scenery of wold, and fen, and sandy coast—made a deep impress on the poet's mind, and is reflected again and again in his earlier writings. In the parsonage of Somersby, which was then the only considerable house in the little hamlet, Alfred was born August 6th, 1809. His father was a man of ability, with intellectual and artistic interests; books were at hand, and the three elder boys not only became great readers, but from childhood were accustomed to write original verses. The life of the Tennysons was a somewhat secluded one; Alfred was naturally shy, with a bent towards solitary and imaginative pursuits. These tendencies may have been fostered by the character of his early education. He was not sent to a great public school, like most English boys of his class, but attended the village school at Somersby, then the grammar school at the neighbouring town of Louth, and was finally prepared for entering college by home tuition. Already before he had become an undergraduate, he was an author, having, along with his elder brother Charles, written a volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*, which was published at Louth in 1827 by a local bookseller. The work is creditable to such youthful poets (the poems contributed by Alfred were composed between his fifteenth and his seventeenth year), but more remarkable for the absence of marked immaturity than for the presence of positive merits. The breadth of the authors' reading is attested by quotations prefixed to the various pieces: Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, Terence, Lucretius, Sallust, Tacitus, Byron, Cowper, Gray, Hume, Moore, Scott, Beattie and Addison being all put under contribution.

In 1828 Charles and Alfred entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where the eldest brother, Frederick, was already a student. There the Tenny-

sons were associated with some of the most brilliant and promising of their contemporaries. Alfred formed an especially warm friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam, a young man of extraordinary endowments, whose premature death he subsequently commemorated in *Is Memoriam*. In 1829 Tennyson won the Chancellor's prize for English verse by a poem on "Timbuctoo," where for the first time in his work, there is some promise of future excellence, and some faint touches of his later style. Next year his poetic career may be said really to have begun with a small volume entitled *Poems Chiefly Lyrical*, which in such poems as *Claribel*, *The Dying Swan*, *Mariana*, and *The Poet*, clearly exhibits some of his characteristic qualities. The volume was favourably reviewed by Leigh Hunt and Hallam, but severely criticized by "Christopher North" in *Blackwood*. In the same year the author embarked on a very different undertaking, going with Hallam to Spain in order to carry, to the revolutionists there, money and letters from English sympathizers. In 1831 his college career was brought to a close by the death of his father, and he returned to Somersby. Here he completed a second volume of poems, published in 1832. This marks another advance in poetic art, and contains some of his most characteristic pieces: *The Lady of Shalott*, *Oenone*, *The Palace of Art*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Lotus-Eaters*, *The Two Voices*. It should be remembered, however, that several of these do not now appear in their original form, and that much of their perfection is due to revisions later than 1832. This volume, as well as its predecessor, was severely criticized, especially by the *Quarterly*. But although in this article justice was not done to the merits of the volume, the strictures upon defects were in the main well grounded, as the poet himself tacitly acknowledged by omitting or amending in subsequent editions the objectionable passages. Another result of the hostility of the critics was that Tennyson, who was always morbidly sensitive to criticism even from the most friendly source, ceased publishing for almost ten years, except that verses from his pen occasionally appeared in the pages of *Literary Annuals*. This ten-years silence is characteristic of the man, of his self-restraint and power of patient application—potent factors in the ultimate perfection of his work.

The sudden death of his friend Hallam, in September 1833, plunged Tennyson for a time in profound sorrow, but was doubtless effective in maturing and deepening his emotional and intellectual life. The poet's sister had been betrothed to Hallam; over the household at Somersby, of which Alfred, in the absence of his elder brothers,

was now the head, there gathered a deep gloom. The feelings and ideas which centred about this great sorrow of his youthful days, the poet soon began to embody in short lyrics; these through successive years grew in number and variety, and finally took shape in what by many is considered Tennyson's greatest work, *In Memoriam*.

It was in 1836, when Charles Tennyson was married to Louisa Sellwood, that in all probability Alfred fell in love with the bride's sister, to whom, in course of time he became engaged. The small fortune which he had inherited was insufficient to provide a maintenance for a married pair; poetry, to which he had devoted his life, seemed unlikely ever to yield him a sufficient income. Yet, characteristically enough, Tennyson neither attempted to find a more lucrative profession, nor even departed from his resolve to refrain from again seeking public notice until his genius and his work had become fully matured. In consequence, the friends of his betrothed put an end to the correspondence of the lovers; and a long period of trial began for the poet, when his prospects in love, in worldly fortune, in poetic success, seemed almost hopelessly overcast. In 1837 the family removed from Somersby to High Beech in Epping Forest, then to Tunbridge Wells, and then to the neighbourhood of Maidstone. The change of residence brought Tennyson into closer proximity with the capital, and henceforward, he frequently resorted thither to visit old friends like Spedding, and gradually became personally known in the literary circles of London. Among other notable men he met with Carlyle, found pleasure in the company of this uncouth genius and his clever wife, and, in turn, was regarded with unusual favour by a keen-eyed and censorious pair of critics. Tennyson was one of the very few distinguished men whose personality impressed Carlyle favourably. The account which the latter gives of Tennyson in a letter to Emerson, dated August 1844, is worth quoting at length:—

"Moxon informs me that Tennyson is now in Town, and means to come and see me. Of this latter result I shall be very glad. Alfred is one of the few British and Foreign Figures (a not increasing number, I think!) who are and remain beautiful to me—a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, Brother! However, I doubt he will not come; he often skips me in these brief visits to Town; skips everybody, indeed; being a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom,—carrying a bit of chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into Cosmos. Alfred is the son of a Lincolnshire Gentleman Farmer, I think; indeed you see in his verses that he is a native of 'moated granges,' and green flat pastures, not of mountains and their torrents and storms. He had his breeding at Cambridge, as for the Law or Church; being master of a small annuity on his Father's decease, he preferred clubbing with his Mother and some

Sisters, to live unpromoted and write poems. In this way he lives still, now here, now there; the family always within reach of London, never in it; he himself making rare and brief visits, lodging in some old comrade's rooms. I think he must be under forty—not much under it. One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusty-dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail—and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not know, in these late decades, such company over a pipe! We shall see what he will produce. He is often unwell; very chaotic—his way is through Chaos and the Bottleneck and Pathless; not handy for making out many miles upon."

Meanwhile, in 1842, two years before this letter was written, Tennyson gave conclusive evidence of the power that was in him, by the publication of two volumes containing, in the first place, a selection from the poems of 1830 and of 1832, and, secondly, a large number of new pieces. Among the latter are *Morte d'Arthur*, *Ulysses*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, *The Talking Oak*, *Locksley Hall*, *Dora*, *St. Simeon Stylites*, *St. Agnes' Eve*, "Break, break, break," and the three poems "You ask me why," "Of old sat Freedom," "Love thou thy land." Such pieces as these represent the mature art of their author, and some of them he never surpassed. It was about the time of the publication of these volumes that the fortunes of their author reached their lowest point. The failure of a manufacturing scheme in which he had invested all his means left him penniless. "Then followed," says his son and biographer, "a season of real hardship, and many trials for my father and mother, since marriage seemed to be further off than ever. So severe a hypochondria set in upon him that his friends despaired of his life. 'I have,' he writes, 'drunk one of those most bitter draughts out of the cup of life, which go near to make men hate the world they live in.'" But, at length, the fates became propitious. In the first place the excellence of the collected poems of 1842 rapidly won general recognition; during his ten years of silence Tennyson's reputation had been steadily growing, the two volumes of 1842 set it upon a firm basis. From that day to this, he has held the first place in general estimation among contemporary poets. In 1845 Wordsworth pronounced him "decidedly the first of our living poets"; in the same year the fourth edition of the *Poems* of 1842 was called for, and the publisher, Mozon, said that Tennyson was the only poet by the publication of whose works he had not been a loser. Further, in 1845, the prime minister, Sir Robert Peel, through the intervention of Tennyson's old college friend Milnes (Lord Houghton), conferred upon him a pension of £300

a year. This was a timely relief to pecuniary difficulties which were at this date very embarrassing. *The Princess*, his first long work, was published in 1847. Through a fanciful story of a Princess who founds a university for women, it gave a poetical presentation and solution of the 'woman question'; but rather disappointed, at the time, the high expectations excited by the earlier writings. On the other hand, *In Memoriam*, which appeared in 1850, has from the beginning been considered one of the finest products of his genius. It consists of a series of lyrics giving utterance to various moods and thoughts to which the great sorrow of his youth had given birth. These had been carefully elaborated during a long period, are extraordinarily finished in their expression and are fuller of substance than any other of the more ambitious works of their author. No other poem so adequately represents the current thought and average attitude of Tennyson's generation in regard to many of the great problems of the time. In the year of the publication of *In Memoriam*, the laureateship, rendered vacant by the death of Wordsworth, was bestowed upon its author. In the same year his marriage with Emily Sellwood took place. They had been separated from one another for ten years; Tennyson's age was forty-one, the bride's thirty-seven. But their fidelity was rewarded. "The peace of God," Tennyson said, "came into my life before the altar when I married her"; and indeed the remainder of the poet's long life, apart from the death in the first years of manhood of his second son, is a record of happiness and success such as does not fall to the lot of many men.

After a tour in Italy the Tennysons in 1853 took up their residence at Farringford, in the Isle of Wight, which was henceforth their home, and the poet entered upon a period of sure and increasing popularity and growing worldly prosperity. He never relaxed, however, even in advanced old age, his strenuous poetic industry; hence a long series of works of a high order of merit, of which we will mention only the more important. In 1855, *Maud*, a lyrical monodrama, was published, about which critical opinion was then and still remains greatly divided, though the poet himself regarded it with special favour. In 1857, Bayard Taylor visited Tennyson at his home and records his impressions: "He is tall and broad-shouldered as a son of Anak, with hair, beard, and eyes of Southern darkness. Something in the lofty brow and aquiline nose suggests Dante, but such a deep, mellow chest-voice never could have come from Italian lungs. He proposed a walk, as the day was wonderfully clear and beautiful. We climbed the steep comb

of the chalk cliff, and slowly wandered westward until we reached the Needles, at the extremity of the Island, and some three or four miles distant from his residence. During the conversation with which we beguiled the way, I was struck with the variety of his knowledge. Not a little flower on the downs, which the sheep had spared, escaped his notice, and the geology of the coast, both terrestrial and submarine, were perfectly familiar to him. I thought of a remark that I had once heard from the lips of a distinguished English author [Thackeray] that Tennyson was the wisest man he knew."

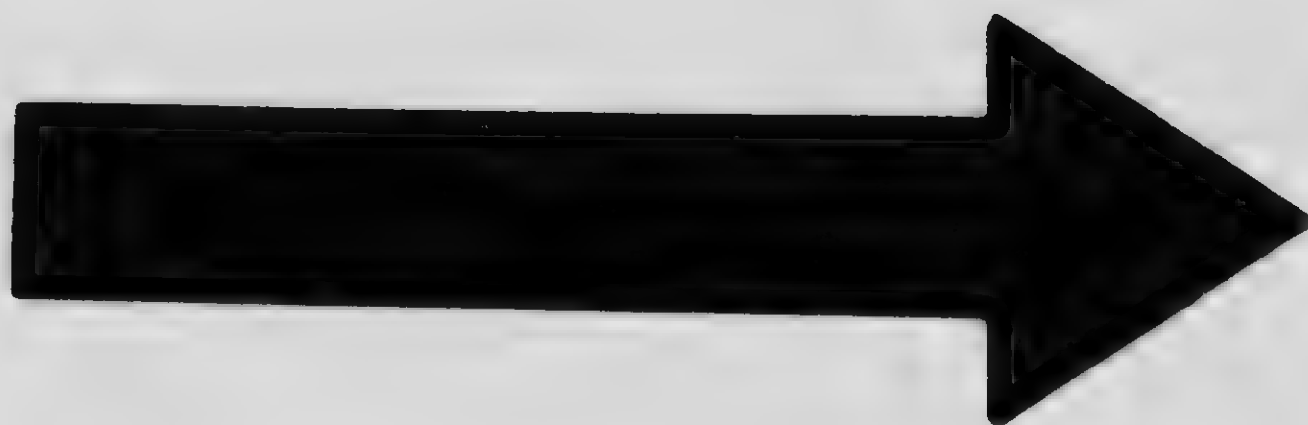
Tennyson, as such poems as *The Lady of Shalott* and *Morte d'Arthur* show, had been early attracted by the legendary tales of King Arthur, which to several poets had seemed a rich storehouse of poetical material. About the year 1857¹ he began to occupy himself specially with these legends; and from this time on until the middle seventies his chief energy was given to the composition of a series of poems from these sources, which were ultimately arranged to form a composite whole, entitled the *Idylls of the King*. These poems proved very acceptable to the general taste, and the poet began to reap a fortune from the sale of his works. Of the volume published in 1862, entitled *Enoch Arden*, which mainly consisted of English Idylls, sixty thousand copies were rapidly sold. This, perhaps, marks the height of his popularity.

In 1875 he entered on a new field with the publication of an historical drama, *Queen Mary*, followed in 1876 by a similar work, *Harold*, and by other dramatic pieces in later years. In the drama Tennyson was less successful than in any other department which he attempted, and this lack of success gave rise to a widespread feeling that his powers were now in decline. Such a conclusion was most decisively negatived by the appearance of *Ballads and Other Poems* in 1880, where he returned to less ambitious and lengthy but more congenial forms—a collection which Mr. Theodore Watts terms "the most richly various volume of English verse that has appeared in [Tennyson's] century." At intervals until the very close of his long life, he produced similar miscellaneous collections of poems: *Tiresias and Other Poems*, 1885, *Demeter and Other Poems*,* 1889, *The Death of Oenone and Other Poems*, 1892. Some of the pieces contained in these miscellanies were doubtless the gleanings of earlier years; but in others there were qualities which clearly showed them to be the

* Twenty thousand copies of this book were sold within a week.

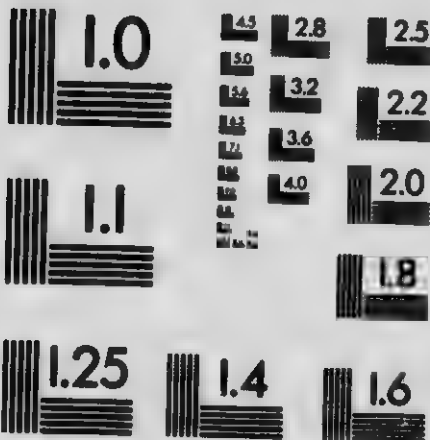
products of a new epoch in a genius that went on changing and developing even in advanced old age. In the most characteristic pieces, *The Revenge*, *The Relief of Lucknow*, *Rizpah*, *Vastness*, etc., there is a vigour and dramatic force absent in his earlier work, with less of that minute finish and elaborate perfection of phrase which is so often his chief merit. On the other hand, in *Freedom*, *To Virgil*, and *Crossing the Bar*, we have poems in the more familiar Tennysonian style, not a whit inferior to similar compositions in the volumes of his prime. In 1884 Tennyson was raised to the peerage as Baron of Aldworth and Farringford. The first part of his title was derived from a second residence which he had built for himself in Surrey, choosing a very retired situation in order that he might escape the idle curiosity of tourists. In 1886, the second great sorrow of his life befell Tennyson; his younger son, Lionel, died on the return voyage from India, where he had contracted a fever.

To Tennyson's continued mental vigour in advanced old age, his works bear testimony; his bodily strength was also little abated. "At eighty-two," his son reports, "my father preserved the high spirits of youth. He would defy his friends to get up twenty times quickly from a low chair without touching it with their hands while he was performing this feat himself, and one afternoon he had a long waltz with M—— in the ball room." This vigour was maintained almost to the very close of his long life. It was the sixth of October, 1892, when the great poet breathed his last. "Nothing could have been more striking than the scene during the last few hours," writes his medical attendant. "On the bed a figure of breathing marble, flooded and bathed in the light of the full moon streaming through the oriel window; his hand clasping the Shakespeare which he had asked for but recently, and which he had kept by him to the end; the moonlight, the majestic figure as he lay there, 'drawing thicker breath,' irresistibly brought to our minds his own 'Passing of Arthur.'" "Some friends and servants came to see him. He looked very grand and peaceful with the deep furrows of thought almost smoothed away, and the old clergyman of Lurgashall stood by the bed with his hands raised, and said, 'Lord Tennyson, God has taken you, who made you a prince of men. Farewell!'"



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THE POET.

Published in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, 1830. This poem describes, in metaphorical guise, the work and influence of the true poet. It will be noted that it is not the artistic side of the poet's work that is emphasized—his power to create what is beautiful,—but his prophetic office, his power to seize and proclaim truth and stimulate men to higher effort. The *Westminster Review*, Jan. 1831, sums up the leading ideas of this poem as to the function of the poets: "They can influence the association of unnumbered hearts; they can disseminate principles; they can give those principles power over men's imaginations; they can excite in a good cause the sustained enthusiasm that is sure to conquer; they can blast the laurels of tyrants, and hallow the memories of the martyrs of patriotism; they can act with a force, the extent of which it is difficult to estimate, upon national feelings and character, and consequently upon national happiness" (*Quoted by Prof. Sykes*).

1. **golden.** This adjective is often used in poetry to indicate, somewhat vaguely, rare beauty and perfection; its special application here may have been suggested by its use in the common phrase "the golden age."

2. The natural meaning would seem to be that the poet hates hatred, loves love, etc. But it has also been suggested, very improbably, that "hate of hate" is a superlative, meaning intense hatred; or again, that the poet is hated by those who hate, loved by those who love, etc.

5-8. He is a *seer*; he penetrates into the inner meaning of things.

7. **everlasting will.** cf. *In Memoriam*, cxxxi:

O living will that shall endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock.

Tennyson explained "will" in this quotation "as that which we know as Free-will, the higher and enduring part of man" (*Life*, I., p. 319). "Free-will was undoubtedly, he said, the 'main miracle.'" "Free-will and its relation to the meaning of human life and to circumstance was latterly one of his most common subjects of conversation" (*Life*, I., p. 316).

9-10. He attains the most difficult and inaccessible paths which lead to fame. The epithet 'echoing' may be intended to suggest his loneliness in these paths; only the select few reach such heights; or it may

symbolize the fact that some message from these remote excursions of his spirit come back to ordinary men.

11. *viewless*. Invisible; cf. Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, iii, 1: "To be imprisoned in the viewless winds."

13. Certain Indian tribes of South America blow from a tube eight to twelve feet long poisoned arrows, and are able to kill game and men at a considerable distance.

15. *Calpe*. The ancient name for Gibraltar, one of the two pillars (the southern one was *Abyla*) which Hercules was fabled to have erected on each side of the exit from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. As these pillars long marked the western limit of the world familiar to the Greeks, as did Mount Caucasus the eastern limit, so from Calpe to Caucasus means from one side of the world to the other.

19. *the field flower*. Presumably the dandelion; see l. 24 below.

21-24. The message of the poet takes root in the minds of others, who, in turn, are agents to spread his teachings.

27. *breathing*. Full of life.

29. The image in the writer's mind is that of planets obtaining their light from the sun.

31-32. New and higher ideals arise in the minds of men.

36. *rare*. Exquisitely beautiful; cf. Scott's *Proud Maisie*.

Sweet Robin sits on the bush
Singing so rarely.

41-42. There is no violence and bloodshed in this revolution, outworn institutions are gradually displaced, "melt like snow." Tennyson's desire for gradual progress and his detestation of violent revolutions is everywhere apparent in his work; cf. "You ask me why," stanzas 3-4, and "Love thou thy land."

46. *Wisdom*. For Tennyson's conception of Wisdom, see *In Memoriam*, cxiv., where the superiority of wisdom to knowledge is emphasized,—knowledge is rash and impetuous and must submit to the restraining guidance of wisdom, who is "heavenly of the soul," while knowledge is "earthly of the mind."

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

First published in 1832, but, as the notes show, the poem has been greatly improved by later revision. It is the first work which Tennyson based upon Arthurian legends; in this case contained, according to Palgrave, in an Italian novel (see note on L. 9). *Lancelot and Elaine* is a very different treatment of the same story where the interest is more human and the motives and characters perfectly comprehensible. Here we have a beautiful series of pictures presenting part of the history of a mysterious being, involved in a strange fate. This mystery of the poem suggests symbolism, to which the poet was inclined, as, for example, in *The Palace of Art* and the *Idylls of the King*; so Mr. Hutton seems to think that the history of the poet's own genius is shadowed forth, which "was sick of the magic of fancy and its picture-shadows, and was turning away from them to the poetry of human life." While Mr. Alfred Ainger (as quoted by Mr. Sykes) says: "The key to this wonderful tale of magic, and yet of deep human significance, is to be found, perhaps, in the lines:

Or when the moon was overhead
Came two young lovers lately wed;
'I am half sick of shadows' said
The Lady of Shalott.

The new-born love of something, for some one, in the wide world from which she has been so long excluded, takes her out of the region of shadows into that of realities. The curse is the anguish of unrequited love. The shock of her disappointment kills her." Mr. Ainger's interpretation was derived from the poet himself; but it was doubtless the picturesque aspects of the subject, rather than any deep human significance that attracted and occupied the poet.

3. wold. 'Open country.' The landscape the poet was most familiar with at this time was the landscape of Lincolnshire. According to the *Century Dictionary* "The wolds of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire are high rolling districts, bare of trees and exactly similar to the downs of the southern part of England." The word appears in *Lear*, iii, 4, in the form "old."

meet the sky. Note how suggestive is the phrase of the wide uninterrupted prospect.

5. many-tower'd Camelot. Camelot is the capital of Arthur's domain, identified with Winchester by Malory (Bk. II, chap. xix); but

in Tennyson's treatment of the Arthurian legends, the scenes and geography are wholly imaginary, and the poet seems purposely to shun any touch which might serve to connect his scenes with actual localities.

In *Gareth and Lynette* we have a description of Camelot :

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in stone ;
Which Merlin's hand, the mage at Arthur's court,
Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere
At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.

6-9. In the edition of 1832, these lines read—

The yellow-leaved waterlily,
The green-sheathed daffodilly,
Tremble in the water chilly,
Round about Shalott.

9. *Shalott*. This form of the name is probably suggested by Italian original *Donna di Scalotta*. In the *Idylls of the King*, 'Astolat,' the form used by Malory, is employed.

10-12. In 1832 the reading was—

Willows whiten, aspens shiver,
The sunbeam-showers break and quiver
In the stream that runneth ever.

10. *Willows whiten* through the breeze exposing the lower and lighter side of the willow leaves.

11. *dusk and shiver*. The darkening is due to the breaking up of the smooth surface of the water so that it no longer reflects the light.

56. *pad*. 'An easy paced horse' (etymologically connected with *path*).

64. *still*. 'Always,' 'ever.'

76. *greaves*. 'Armor to protect the shins.'

82. free. The bridle was held with a slack hand.

84. Galaxy. The Milky Way (from Gk. γάλα γάλακτος, milk).

86. to. In ed. of 1832 "from"; so also l. 104.

87. blazon'd. 'Ornamented with heraldic devices.'

baldric. 'A belt worn over one shoulder and crossing the breast.'

91. All. Cf. Coleridge, *Ancient Mariner*:

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand, etc.

98. bearded meteor. The beard is, of course, what could be more prosaically described as the 'tail.'

99. still. In ed. of 1832, "green."

101. hooves. Archaic plural.

115. The mirror reflects both Lancelot on the bank, and his image in the water.

119. Note how throughout the poem, the season of the year and the weather are made to harmonize with the events of the story; the same device is adopted in the *Idylls of the King*.

OENONE.

First printed in the volume of 1832; but, in parts, greatly altered and improved since. It is the first of the Tennysonian *Idylls* proper—a form imitating in general character and in style the works of Theocritus, a Greek poet of the Alexandrian period. Further, it is an example of Tennyson's practice of infusing a modern spirit into a classical theme. The latter affords a picturesque framework with opportunities for beautiful details to charm the imaginative vision and gratify the æsthetic taste; the former gives elevation, and profounder interest and significance to the subject. In the present poem the combination is not so complete and successful as in some other poems (*Ulysses*, for example) being chiefly found in Athene's speech, but the theme is brought closer to the reader's sympathies by the pathetic interest of the situation.

1. This opening description is said to have been suggested by what the poet saw in the Pyrenees, which he visited in the autumn of 1831. See the note on *In the Valley of Caunteretz*, p. 99.

Ida. The mountain chain to the south of the district of Troas.

Ionian. Ionia was the name applied to a narrow strip of the coast of Asia Minor from the river Hermus, on the north, to the Meander, on the south.

3-5. Those who have seen the movements of mist on the mountains will appreciate the felicity of this description.

10. topmost Gargarus. The summit of Gargarus; a Latin idiom, cf. "summus mons." *Gargarus* is one of the highest peaks in Ida, some 5,000 feet above the sea.

11. takes the morning. 'Catches the first rays of the rising sun.'

13. Ilion. Troy.

15-16. forlorn Of Paris. Bereft of Paris; cf. *Par. Lost*, x, 921: "Forlorn of thee."

20. fragment of rock (see the corresponding line in the version of 1832).

21-22. Until the sun had sunk so low that the shadow of the mountain reached the place where Oenone was sitting.

23-24. A refrain repeated at intervals through the poem, is a frequent peculiarity of Greek idylls; cf. Theocritus, i. and ii., Moschus, *Epitaph*; the same device is found in Spenser, *Prothalamium*, and Pope, *Pastorals*, iii., etc.

24. many-fountain'd Ida, an exact translation of Homer, *Iliad*, viii., 47: "Ἰδην πολυπίδακα."

27. Cf. Theocritus, *Idyll* vii., 22: ἀνίκα δὴ καὶ σαῦρος ἐφ' αἰμασσιαῖσι καθέυδει (When, indeed, the lizard is sleeping on the wall of loose stones).

28-29. and the winds are dead. The purple flower droops. The earlier reading was "and the cicada sleeps. The purple flowers droop." This present reading was not introduced until 1884.

30. Cf. *Henry VI.*, Part II., ii., 3: "Mine eyes are full of tears, my heart of grief."

37. **cold crown'd snake.** Theocritus speaks of the *cold* snake; "crown'd" refers to its crest or hood. The resemblance of the crest to a crown is the probable origin of the name "basilisk," which is a diminutive formed from the Gk. word for 'king.'

38. **a River-God.** According to the myth, this river-god was Kebren (Κεβρήν).

40-42. According to the myth, the walls of Troy rose under the influence of Apollo's lyre (see Ovid, *Heroides*, xv., 179); cf. *Tithonus*,

Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Cf. also the building of Pandemonium in *Par. Lost*, i., 710.

51. **white-hooved.** The usual form would be "white-hoofed"; cf. 'hooves' for 'hoofs' in *Lady of Shalott*, 101.

52. **Simois.** One of the rivers of Troas.

48. **lawn.** Originally meant a clearing in a wood, then a meadow; cf. *Lycidas*, l. 25.

55. **solitary morning.** Refers to the remoteness and aloofness of the first rays of direct light from the sun.

57. The light of a star becomes pale and white in the dawn. Cf. *The Princess*, iii., 1: "morn in the white wake of the morning star," and *Marriage of Geraint*, 734: "the white and glittering star of morn."

61-62. The wind carries the spray into the air, and the increased number of watery particles which break up the rays of light, intensify the colour. To such rainbows, Tennyson refers in *Sea-Fairies*, and in *Princess*, v., 308:

This flake of rainbow flying on the highest
Foam of men's deeds.

66. In the fabulous gardens of the Hesperides at the western limit of the world were certain famous golden apples, which it was one of the labours of Hercules to obtain.

67. **Ambrosia** was the food of the Greek gods.

74. **whatever Oread haunt.** Imitation of a classical construction = 'any Oread that haunts.' *Oread* means 'mountain-nymph.'

76. married brows. "Eyebrows that meet," considered a great beauty by the Greeks. Cf. Theocritus, *Idyll* viii., 72: σύνοφρυς κόρα ('the maid of the meeting eyebrows').

80. full-faced, according to Rowe and Webb, "'not a face being absent,' or perhaps also in allusion to the majestic brows of the Gods." But the reference seems rather to be to the fact that the apple was cast full in the face of all the Gods. The picture presented by the words "When all—Peleus" is that of the Olympian gods facing the spectator in a long row.

81. Ranged = 'were placed in order.' Cf. *Princess*, iii., 101-2:

and gained
The terrace ranged along the northern front.

84. Delivering. For this use of the word compare *Richard II.*, iii., 3:

Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parle
Into his ruin'd ears, and thus deliver, etc.

95-98. Suggested doubtless by *Iliad*, xiv., 347-9:

τοῖσι δ' ὑπὸ χθών δια φύεν νεοθλήα ποιήν
λατὸν θ' ἱερσέμεντα ἰδὲ κρίκον ἢ δ' ὑάκινθον
πικρὸν καὶ μαλακόν.

('And beneath them the divine earth caused to spring up fresh new grass, and dewy lotus, and crocus, and hyacinth thick and soft').

Cf. also *Par. Lost*, iv., 710, fol.

96. Cf. *In Memoriam*, lxxxiii.: "Laburnums, dropping wells of fire."

97. amaracus, and asphodel. Greek names of flowers; the former identified by some with sweet marjoram, the latter is a species of lily. In *Odyssey* ii., 539, the shades of the heroes are represented as haunting an asphodel meadow.

104. The crested peacock was sacred to Here (Juno).

105-106. Cf. *Iliad*, xiv., 350-351:—

ἐπὶ δὲ νεφέλῃν ἴσσαντο
καλὴν χρυσεὴν στιλπνὰ δ' ἀνέπιπτον ἱερσάει

('And they were clothed over with a cloud beauteous, golden; and from it kept falling glittering dew-drops').

124. *throned of wisdom.* 'Power which has been attained, and is maintained by wisdom.'

128. Paris was the son of Priam, King of Troy; but as a dream of his mother, Hecuba, indicated that the child was to bring misfortune to the city, he was exposed on Mount Ida, where he was found by a shepherd, who brought the boy up as his own son.

131. Cf. *Lucretius*, iii., 18, and the conclusion of *The Lotos-Eaters*.

137. *Flatter'd his spirit.* 'Charmed his spirit'; cf. *Maud*, xiv., iii.: "The fancy flatter'd my mind."

139-140. 'With the spear athwart, or across, her shoulders.'

144-150. The sentiment of these five lines is characteristic of Tennyson and his work. He is the poet of self-control, moderation, duty, law, as his work is the manifestation of these very qualities; in these respects both his theory and practice are the very opposite of some of the most poetical natures,—of Shelley, for example, with his ardour and passion.

144. fol. cf. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, ll. 201, fol.

153. *Sequel of guerdon.* 'A reward to follow,' 'the addition of a reward.'

164-165. *grow Sinew'd with.* 'Become strengthened by.'

165-167. 'The mature will, having passed through all kinds of experience, and having come to be identical with law (or duty) is commensurate with perfect freedom.' To the truly disciplined will, obedience to law or duty is perfect freedom, because that is all that the perfected will desires; cf. the phrase in the Collect for Peace in the *Book of Common Prayer*, "O God . . . whose service is perfect freedom."

171. There is of course a play on the two senses of "hear," 'to apprehend by the ears' and 'to give heed to.'

174. *Idalian.* So called from Idalium, a mountain city in Cyprus, reputed to be one of her favourite haunts.

175. According to the myth, Aphrodite was born of the foam of the sea. *Paphos* was a city in Cyprus where she first landed after her birth from the waves.

178. **Ambrosial.** The epithet is often applied by Homer to the hair of the gods, and to other things belonging to them. It may refer here to the fragrance of the hair.

187. This was Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Lacedaemon. Paris subsequently carried her off, and this was the cause of the Trojan war, and the destruction of Troy itself.

208. In order to build ships for Paris' expedition to Greece, where he was to carry off Helen.

219. **trembling.** Refers to the *twinkling* of the stars.

222. **fragments.** Cf. on l. 20 above.

224. **The Abominable.** Eris, the goddess of strife.

245-50. She has vague premonitions of the evils to befall the city of Troy in consequence of Paris' winning the fairest wife in Greece.

258. **their** refers to Paris and Helen.

263. **Cassandra**, daughter of Priam, upon whom Apollo bestowed the gift of prophecy, with the drawback that her prophecies should never be believed. Accordingly, when she prophesied the siege and destruction of Troy, they shut her up in prison as a mad woman.

264. **A fire dances before her.** In Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1256, Cassandra exclaims: *παπαί, ὅλοντε πῦρ ἐπέρχεται ὅ μοι* ('Ah me, the fire, how it comes upon me now').

THE EPIC.

These lines and 'l. 273-303 serve merely as a setting to *Morte d'Arthur*; and to motive of the abrupt opening of the poem proper.

3. **the sacred bush.** The mistletoe. The hanging of the mistletoe is one of those relics of ancient religious customs which have become associated with Christian festivals, the plant having been regarded with the utmost reverence by the Druids.

5. **wassail-bowl.** "wassail" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon exclamation meaning 'good health,' used in drinking. The term then came to be applied to a festive occasion, or to the liquor drunk,

especially to the spiced ale associated with New Year and Christmas festivities.

15. the church commissioners. Persons appointed by the government to determine matters in connection with the churches would be likely to come into collision with the views of the conservative parson.

16. hawking at. Attacking; the connection of this metaphorical sense with the old sport of hawking is sufficiently evident. Geology with its revolutionary views as to the history of the globe could not commend itself to the parson.

36. Mastodon. A gigantic animal, now extinct, akin to the elephant.

50-51. Compare the description of Tennyson's own reading on p. 18, *ante*.

MORTE D'ARTHUR.

The source of *Morte d'Arthur* is Sir Thomas Malory's version of the Arthurian legends—a book entitled *Morte d'Arthur*, written about 1570. The original is followed with remarkable closeness in parts, and the comparison is so interesting that we quote the whole (*viz.*, chap. v. of Bk. xxi.):—

Ah, Sir Launcelet, said king Arthur, this day have I sore missed thee. Alas, that ever I was against thee, for now have I my death, whereof Sir Gawaine me warned in my dream. Then Sir Lucan took up the king the one part, and Sir Bedivere the other part, and in the lifting, the king swooned, and Sir Lucan fell in a swoon with the lift, that the part of his bowels fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight's heart brast. And when king Arthur came to himself again, he beheld Sir Lucan how he lay foaming at the mouth, and part of his bowels lay at his feet. Alas, said the king, this is unto me a fully heavy sight to see this noble duke so die for my sake, for he would have holpen me that had more need of help than I. Alas, he would not complain him, his heart was so set to help me. Now Jesu have mercy upon his soul. Then Sir Bedivere wept for the death of his brother. Leave this mourning and weeping, said the king, for all this will not avail me: for, wit thou well, and I might live myself, the death of Sir Lucan would grieve me evermore; but my time hieth fast, said the king. Therefore, said Arthur, take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again, and tell me what thou there seest. My lord, said Bedivere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again. So Sir Bedivere

4. *Lyonnesse*. A fabulous country extending from Cornwall to the Sicily Isles, and supposed to have been subsequently submerged by the sea.

6. *bold Sir Bedivere*. "Bold" is a permanent epithet that is connected with Sir Bedivere when there is no reason in the context for calling attention to that particular quality. Such permanent epithets are especially common in Homer, so Achilles is *ποδάργης* (swift footed), Ulysses *πολύμητις* (crafty), etc. In Virgil *pius* is a frequent epithet of Aeneas; in Scott, William of Deloraine is "good at need."

7. This line is omitted in *The Passing of Arthur*, the only change the poet made in the original poem when he developed *Morte d'Arthur* into *The Passing of Arthur*.

9. *chancel*. Properly, the eastern portion of the church containing the choir and altar, often railed off from the main part of the edifice.

12. *a great water*. "This phrase has probably often been ridiculed as affected phraseology for 'a great lake'; but it is an instance of the intense presentative power of Mr. Tennyson's genius. It precisely marks the appearance of a large lake outspread and taken in at one glance from a high ground. Had 'a great lake' been substituted for it, the phrase would have needed to be translated by the mind into water of a certain shape and size, before the picture was realized by the imagination. 'A great lake' is, in fact, one degree removed from the sensuous to the logical,—from the individual appearance to the generic name, and is, therefore, less poetic and pictorial" (Brimley). The word "water" is used in the same sense by Malory (see iv., 6).

21. *Camelot*. See note on *Lady of Shalott*, l. 5.

23. *Merlin*. The famous enchanter; he received Arthur at his birth, and reappears repeatedly in the legends; he is one of the chief characters in the *Idyll Merlin and Vivien*.

23-24. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, where this prophecy in regard to Arthur is referred to—

And Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn,
Though men may wound him, that he will not die,
But pass, and come again.

27. *Excalibur*. The word is said to be of Celtic origin and to mean 'cut-steel'; Spenser calls Arthur's sword *Morddure*, i.e., 'the hard-biter.' In the stories of chivalry, the sword, spear, etc., of the heroes,

which often possessed magical powers, have commonly special names. In the following stanza from Longfellow, the names of the swords of Charlemagne, The Cid, Orlando, Arthur, and Lancelot are successively mentioned:

It is the sword of a good Knight,
Tho' homespun be his mail;
What matter if it be not bright
Joyeuse, Colada, Durindale,
Excalibar, or Aroundight.

In *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 295, Excalibur is described:

the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich
With jewels—elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
"Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
"Cast me away!"

31. *samite* is a rich silk stuff interwoven with threads of gold and silver.

37. *middle mere*. 'Middle of the mere.' Tennyson is imitating a common Latin construction; cf. note on *Oenone*, 10.

38. *lightly*. 'Nimbly,' 'quickly'; the word is used frequently by Malory. See pp. 187-8 above.

43. *hest*. 'Command'; frequent in Shakespeare, etc.

48-51. Note the variations of consonants, vowels, and pauses in this line to give sound effects in keeping with the sense.

51. *levels*. "The classic *aequora* may have suggested the 'shining levels,' but there is a deeper reason for the change of phrase, for the great water as seen from the high ground, becomes a series of flashing surfaces when Sir Bedivere looks along it; from its margin" (Brimley). Cf. Virgil, *Georgics I.*, 469: *tellus quoque et aequora*.

55. *keen with frost*. We connect frost with transparency of the air, and the transparency of the air made the moonlight clearer.

56. *diamond sparks*. "The eds. down to 1853 have 'diamond studs'" (Rolfe).

57. *Jacinth*. Another form of hyacinth; the name is applied to a bright coloured, transparent variety of zircon of various shades of red passing into orange.

60. Now looking at one side of the question, now at another. The line is a translation of *Aeneid*, iv., 285: *Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc*.

61. In act to throw. Cf. *The Princess*, li., 429: "A tiger-cat In act to spring." "An expression much used by Pope in his translation of the *Iliad*. Cf. *Il.* iii., 349, ὄρνυτο χαλκῶ, which Pope renders—

Atreides then his massy lance prepares,
In act to throw."

(Rowe and Webb).

63. the many-knotted waterflags. This refers presumably to the iris which, with its blue and yellow flowers and sword shaped leaves, is so common near streams, pools, etc. What the poet refers to by "many-knotted" is not clear. Mr. Sykes enumerates the explanations in his note: "(1) The rootstalk of the flag which shows additional bulbs from year to year; (2) the joints in the flower stalks, of which some half-dozen may be found in each stalk; (3) the large seed-pods that terminate the stalks, a very noticeable feature when the plant is sere; (4) the various bunches or knots of iris in a bed of the plants, so that the whole phrase suggests a thickly matted bed of flags. I favour the last interpretation, though Tennyson's fondness of technical accuracy in his references makes the second more than possible."

70-71. "The ripple washing in the reeds," and the "wild water lapping on the crags" are "two phrases marking exactly the difference of sound produced by water swelling up against a permeable or impermeable barrier" (Brimley).

73. 'Thou hast been false to thy natural honesty, and to thy title of knight.' Cf. Malory: "And thou art named a noble knight and would betray me for the riches of the sword."

80. *lief*. 'Dear' (A. S. *leof*), used by Chaucer (e.g., *Troilus and Cryseide*, iii., l. 596: "myn uncle lief and dere"), Spenser, etc., but now obsolete except in the colloquial phrase, "I had as lief."

86. *chased*. 'Engraved with ornamental designs.'

103-106. Malory, i., 22, tells how Arthur first saw the Lady of the Lake: "So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair

water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo, said Merlin, yonder, is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake: What damsel is that, said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any upon earth and richly beseen."

110. conceit. Used, as often in Shakespeare, in the original sense of 'conception,' 'idea'; cf. *Merch. of Venice*, iii., 4, 2: "You have a noble and a true conceit of godlike amity."

112. The repetition of lines and phrases is Homeric.

122. Tennyson is fond of this bold metaphor; cf. *In Memoriam*, ix.: "Till all my widow'd race be run," *Aylmer's Field*, 720: "I cry to vacant chairs and widow'd walls."

125. 'Who shouldst perform all the services which belonged to them severally.'

129. for. 'Since': a use of *for* common in Shakespeare, e.g., *Richard III.*, ii., 2, 85 (see Abbot's *Shakespearian Grammar*, § 151).

139. a streamer of the northern morn. A ray of the Aurora Borealis (Aurora=dawn, Borealis=northern). Cf. Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, iv., 9:

Shifting like flashes darted forth
By the red streamers of the north.

140. the moving isles, etc. Icebergs; the aurora is more conspicuous in northern latitudes.

171. Remorsefully. 'With pity.' *Remorse* is employed by Shakespeare in sense of 'pity'; so *Merch. of Ven.*, iv., 1, 20:

Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange
Than is thy strange apparent cruelty.

and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, iv., 3, 13:

O Eglamour thou art a gentleman
Valiant, wise, remorseful, well accomplish'd.

182. His breath, made visible by the frosty air, clung about him.

183. The effect that mist has in enlarging the apparent size of objects is a matter of common experience, cf. *Guinevere*, 597:

The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold.

186. *Dry* *clash'd*. We speak of *liquid* sounds; *dry* as applied to sounds means harsh and abrupt. The metaphor is suggested by classical phrases; so in *Iliad*, xiii., 409: *καρφαλέον ἄσπις ἄνσε* ('the shield rang dry' when struck by a spear); *Lucretius*, vi., 119, uses *aridus sonus* (dry sound) in reference to certain kinds of thunder; again *Virgil Georg. I.*, 357-8: *aridus fragor*. Cf. *The Voyage*, l. 10:

Warm broke the breeze against the brow,
Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail.

harness. 'Body-armour'—the original meaning of the word. Cf. *Macbeth*, v., 5, 52: "At least we'll die with harness on our back."

186-90. Similar sound-effects in frosty air are noted by Wordsworth, *Influence of Natural Objects*:—

With the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud,
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron.

192. 'The reflections of the moon on the water.'

193. *hove*. For 'hove in sight'; from *heave* 'to rise,' as in Gray's *Elegy*: "Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap"; the phrase is applied to a vessel rising above the horizon.

197. *Black-stoled*. *Stole* is a long loose robe reaching to the feet; cf. *Sir Galahad*, 43.

199. *shiver'd*. Cf. *The Princess*, iii., 73: "Consonant chords that shiver to one note." In the present passage the word seems to convey not only the idea of vibration, but also of shrillness.

tingling. As if the stars had nerves which thrilled in response.

202-3. The details are very effective in suggesting a picture of utter desolation.

209. *casque*. 'Helmet.'

214. *the springing east*. 'The rising sun.' Cf. p. 142, 2nd sentence.

215. *greaves*. See note on *Lady of Shalott*, l. 76.

*cuisse*s. Armour for the thighs; cf. *I. Hen. IV.*, iv., 1, 105: "His cuisses on his thighs."

235. Cf. *Malory*, xiv., 2: "Also Merlin made the Round Table in tokening of the roundness of the world, for by the Round Table is the world signified by right."

240-1. These two lines give expression to the inner sense of the poem.
Cf. *In Memoriam*, Prologue :

Our little systems have their day ;
They have their day and cease to be :
They are but broken lights of thee
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

242. In order that men may develop, and not stagnate, there is need of change. Even good customs are apt to degenerate into mere formalities, and to hamper the growth of the human spirit.

244-5. "May God accept my work and, absorbing it, as it were, into Himself, purify it of all its unworthy elements" (Rowe and Webb).

254. The idea of the earth being bound to the heavens by a gold chain is an old one, and has been supposed to originate with Homer (*Iliad*, viii., 25-26). It is found in *Par. Lost*, ii., 1051, in Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, there is an allusion to it : "According to the allegory of the poets the highest link of nature's chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair," and in Hare's Sermon on the Law of Self-Sacrifice : "This is the golden chain of love, whereby the whole creation is bound to the throne of the Creator."

259. Malory speaks in one passage of a valley and in others of an island of Avilion—mere places of earth, however ; but in Celtic legend the name is connected with the habitation of the blest, and it is in that sense that the poet uses it here.

260. Cf. the description of Elysium, *Odyssey*, vi., 42 :

ὅθι φασὶ θεῶν ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ
ἔμμεται οὐρ' ἀνέρισι τινάσσεται οὔτε ποτ' ὕμῃρ
δρύεται οὔτε χιῶν ἐπιπίλνεται

(Where, they say, the seat of the Gods abideth sure, nor is it shaken by winds or ever wetted by shower, nor does snow come near it.)

and *Lucretius*, iii., 18-22 :—

apparet divum numen sedesque quietas
quas neque concutiant venti nec nubila nimbis
aspergunt neque nix acri concreta pruina
cana cadens violat semperque innubilis aether
integit.

(The divinity of the gods is revealed and their tranquil abodes which neither winds do shake nor clouds drench with rains nor snow congealed by sharp frost harms with hoary fall : an ever-cloudless aether o'ercanopies them.)

and Tennyson himself in *Lucretius* :—

The Gods, who haunt
The lucid interspaces of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow.

218. High from the dais-throne. 'As he sat elevated on the dais-throne.'

223. In the later *Idylls of the King*, the poet's conception of Arthur changes somewhat; and he represents his hero as indifferent about his success in tournaments; he is inferior in this respect to Lancelot (see *Garth and Lynette*, 485-6), but excels in real battle; cf. *Lancelot and Elaine*, ll. 310, fol.

232. Cf. *Matthew* ii., 1-11: "Now when Jesus was born . . . behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him . . . And, lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was . . . And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

234. Round Table. See note on l. 3.

262. Deep-meadow'd. A translation of βαθυλειμος (*Iliad*, ix., 151).

happy. The commentators compare Virgil's "*laetas segetes*" (glad harvest).

263. crown'd with summer sea. Cf. *Odyssey*, x., 195: νῆσον, τὴν περὶ πόντος ἀπείριτος ἐστεφάνωται (an island round which the infinite sea has made a crown).

267. fluting. 'Singing with flute-like notes.' The notion of the swan singing before death is very ancient; it is found in Virgil, Pliny, etc.; cf. *Othello*, v., 2: "I will play the swan and die in music," Tennyson's *Dying Swan*, etc.

268. Ruffles. Refers to the slight opening out of the wings when the swan swims.

269. swarthy webs. 'The dark webbed feet.'

ST. AGNES' EVE.

Published originally in *The Keepsake* for 1837, under the title of *St. Agnes*; included in the *Poems* of 1842; the title changed to *St. Agnes' Eve* in the edition of 1855.

January 21st is sacred to St. Agnes, who, it is narrated, refused to marry the heathen son of the pretor, and after terrible persecution suffered martyrdom in the reign of the emperor Diocletian (284-305, A.D.). With St. Agnes' Eve various superstitions were connected, more especially that upon observing the proper rites, a maiden might see her future husband (cf. Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes*). It is possible that Tennyson felt that the character and circumstances delineated in the poem did not exactly suit St. Agnes, and, accordingly changed the title of the poem, leaving the heroine a nameless embodiment of that ascetic enthusiasm which finds its masculine representative in Sir Galahad; she is "the pure and beautiful enthusiast who has died away from all her human emotions, and become the bride for whom a Heavenly Bridegroom is waiting.... Wordsworth at his best, as in 'Lucy,' might scarcely match the music of these stanzas; their pictorial perfection he could hardly attain unto; every image is in such delicate harmony with the pure young worshipper that it seems to have been transfigured by her purity, and in the last four lines the very sentences faint with the breathless culmination of her rapture" (Luce).

16. *argent round.* 'The full moon.'

19. *mine earthly house.* Cf. *II Corinthians* v., 1: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

21. *Break up.* 'Break open,' as in *I Henry VI.*, 1, 3, and *Matthew* xxiv., 43: "If the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he.... would not have suffered his house to be broken up."

25-36. She too has her marvellous vision, like other maidens on St. Agnes' Eve, but a vision of an import and character very different from theirs.

35. *the shining sea.* Cf. *Revelation* xv., 2: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast.... stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."

"BREAK, BREAK, BREAK."

This poem appeared for the first time in the collection of 1842, and is one of the most beautiful of Tennyson's lyrics. See the remark on p. 90, *ante*, and the note on the same page.

It will be noted that while there are only three syllables in the first line the normal line of the poem contains three feet, and the predominant foot is triasyllabic; so that each of these syllables correspond to a foot, and this line might have consisted of nine syllables. Hence the effective slow music of the opening; the time which would have been occupied by the lacking syllables of the verse being filled up by the slow enunciation of the long vowel sound in 'break,' and by the pauses between the words.

THE VOYAGE.

This poem was first published in the volume entitled *Enoch Arden and Other Poems*, 1864. The spirit of it finds frequent expression in Tennyson's verse; compare *Ulysses* with its yearning for the never resting pursuit of experience and knowledge "beyond the utmost bound of human thought"; or the passage in *Locksley Hall*, "Not in vain the distance beacons, forward, forward let us range"; or in *Freedom*, "O follower of the Vision, still in motion to the distant gleam"; the completest parallel is afforded by *Merlin and the Gleam*. The poem is symbolic, and shadows forth, in a description of a voyage by sea, the unwearied pursuit of some unattainable ideal, a pursuit which gives play to energy and zest to life, and is maintained with cheerful confidence into the very gates of death. Further, apart from its allegorical significance, the poem admirably expresses the joy and fascination of the sailor's life and the freshness and exhilaration of the open sea. Speaking of the attraction of the sea which has exercised so potent an influence on the English race, Stopford Brooke says, "It lives in *The Voyage*, that delightful poem, with its double meaning, half of life on the sea and half of the life of the soul."

11. **The Lady's-head** carved upon the prow,—a common ornament on ships.

12. **shrill salt**. "Shrill" commonly applies to sound, but occasionally, as here, is applied to other sensations,—'keen,' 'piercing,' 'sharp.' In an old poem (*Alliterative Poems*, Ed., Morris) we find "schrylle schynde," shined brightly (quoted *Century Dictionary*).

sheer'd. Cut; the word is a variant of 'shear.'

27. rim. The horizon.
41. peaks that flamed. Volcanoes ; hence the 'ashy rains' below.
44. The cloud of ashes rising, at first, directly upwards and then spreading out, resembles a plume or pine.
52. wakes of fire. The phosphorescence common at sea, caused by minute organisms in the water.
71. the bloodless point reversed. The liberty which is to be attained without bloodshed.
73. One who has never had much faith in the ideal, and at length wholly loses it.
84. The difficulties which the actual constitution of the universe put in their way, they, in their enthusiasm, regarded with contempt.
89. The brilliant days of youth and fully developed manhood are over, old age is the 'colder clime.'

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ.

First published in the *Enoch Arden* volume of 1864. Caunteretz is a beautiful valley of the French Pyrenees. In the summer of 1830, Tennyson and his friend Hallam went to Spain carrying money from English sympathizers to the Spanish insurgents who were under the leadership of Torrijos. Among other places, they visited this valley, and the scenery inspired Tennyson to write the opening passage of *Ænone*. Tennyson did not see the place again for thirty-one years. "On August 6th [1861], my father's birthday, we arrived at Caunteretz, his favourite valley in the Pyrenees. Before our windows we had the torrent rushing over its rocky bed from far away among the mountains and falling in cataracts. Patches of snow lay upon the peaks above, and nearer were great wooded heights glorious with autumn colours, bare rocks here and there, and greenest mountain meadows below. He wrote his lyric 'All along the Valley' after hearing the voice of the torrent seemingly sound deeper as the 'night grew' (in memory of his visit here with Arthur Hallam)." "My father was vexed that he had written 'two and thirty years ago' in his 'All along the Valley' instead of 'one and thirty years ago,' and as late as 1892 wished to alter it since he hated inaccuracy. I persuaded him to let his first reading stand, for the public had learned to love his poem in its present form, and besides 'two and thirty' was more melodious." (*Life* I., p. 475).

NOTES ON BROWNING.

THE Browning family seems to have been a sound, vigorous and genuinely English stock, which, at length, after various remote strains had been grafted upon it, produced the flower of genius in the person of Robert Browning, the poet. His grandfather, who migrated from Dorsetshire to London, was a successful official in the Bank of England, and married a certain Margaret Tittle, a native of St. Kitts in the West Indies. Their son, the poet's father, disappointed in his desire of becoming an artist, also entered the service of the bank in which he continued until advancing years brought superannuation. As a bank clerk he earned a steady income which, if not large, sufficed his needs. In 1811, he married Sarah Ann Weidemann, of Scottish German origin, her father, a native of Hamburg, having settled and married in Dundee; he was a ship-owner in a small way. Browning's parents spent their joint lives in the southern suburbs of London; and there, in Camberwell, their eldest son Robert was born, May 7th, 1812. Only one other child, a daughter, survived infancy; she never married and long after, in her brother's latest years, presided over his household. Browning was specially fortunate in his family relations; in the absence of a public school and university education this quiet, simple, nonconformist family circle counted for more in his case than is perhaps usual with English men of letters. It was not, however, an ordinary middle-class home; the father was a man of exceptional culture with pronounced artistic and literary tastes, something of a scholar and an enthusiastic collector of books and prints. We hear of the charm he exercised over those he met, through his simple, cheerful, unworldly spirit, and his kindly heart. "The father and uncle," writes Dante Rossetti to William Ailingham, "—father especially—show just that submissive yet highly cheerful and capable simplicity of character which often, I think, appears in the family of a great man who uses at last what others have kept for him. The father is a complete oddity—with real genius for drawing and as innocent as a child." To his son he transmitted a vigorous constitution and an energetic and optimistic temperament. The mother was characterized by Carlyle as "the true type of a Scottish gentlewoman;" she was a pious woman with a delicate and nervous organization and was a loving and judicious mother to her distinguished

son. The boy "was a handsome, vigorous, fearless child, and soon developed an unresting activity and a fiery temper. He clamoured for occupation from the moment he could speak." His education was of a somewhat unusual and desultory character; school counted for little, and he did not take a university course. But the house overflowed with books from which he did not fail to profit. "By the indulgence of my father and mother," he wrote in a letter of 1887, "I was allowed to live my own life and choose my own course in it; which, having been the same from the beginning to the end, necessitated a permission to read nearly all sorts of books in a well-stocked and very miscellaneous library. I had no other direction than my parents' taste for whatever was highest and best in literature; but I found out for myself many forgotten fields which proved the richest of pastures." As he grew older he had tutors in various branches, and thus was instructed not only in academic subjects but also in music, singing, dancing, riding and fencing. He had a passion for music and early showed artistic aptitudes. By the time he was twelve years old he had written a volume of poems which seemed to his father to possess real excellence, but which the writer himself, in later life, described as mere echoes of Byron. In 1825 he accidentally became acquainted with the poems of Shelley and Keats, and was profoundly affected by the work of the former. Shelley's influence is the most important single literary factor in his life, and traces of it are clearly perceptible in his first published poem *Pauline*; but Browning's genius was markedly individual and independent, and less in his case than is usual, can one perceive indebtedness either to predecessors or contemporaries.

Browning early determined to be a poet; when the time came to make choice of a profession, "he appealed to his father whether it would not be better for him to see life in the best sense and cultivate the powers of his mind than shackle himself in the very outset of his career by a laborious training foreign to his aim." The father acquiesced and cheerfully furnished from his modest income the means which freed his son from the necessity of pursuing any lucrative calling. "He secured for me," says the latter, "all the ease and comfort that a literary man needs to do good work." By the kindness of an aunt, his mother's sister, a poem of his, *Pauline*, was printed in 1833. This youthful production, apart from impressing favourably two or three discerning critics, wholly failed to attract public attention. In 1833-4 he spent some three months in St. Petersburg.

In 1835 he published *Paracelsus*, a work which holds its own, even when brought into comparison with his maturer productions; although it wholly failed in winning popular favour, *Paracelsus* revealed to the few the advent of a poet of extraordinary promise, and opened for him the doors of literary society in London. He made the acquaintance of many distinguished men, and came into close and friendly relations, especially, with the critic, John Foster, and with the great actor, Macready. Partly through the influence of the latter, he began the writing of plays, and to this species of literature he devoted a considerable part of his poetic activity during the next ten years. Two of these, *Strafford* and *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon*, were produced on the stage with partial success; but the treatment the latter play received at the hands of the manager made the author resolve to write no more for the theatre. In 1838 he made his first visit to Italy, a country with which much of his work and much of his life were to be closely connected. He was already engaged upon a poem based on mediæval Italian history, *Sordello*. It is the most difficult of all his works, and made Browning's name a by-word for obscurity; the impression thus created was doubtless one of the factors in his failure, during the next twenty years, to make any progress in popular regard. As his writings brought no money return, he had recourse to a cheap method of publication; he issued them from time to time, as they accumulated on his hands, in paper-covered pamphlets, each consisting of sixteen double-columned pages. From 1841 to 1846, eight of these pamphlets appeared; in them was to be found some of his best and most characteristic work, notably *Pippa Passes* (1844) and the two collections of shorter poems entitled *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845). The series had the common title, *Bells and Pomegranates*, "to indicate," as the poet explained, "an endeavour towards something like an alternation or mixture of music with discourse, sound with sense, poetry with thought."

A second voyage to Italy was made in 1844. On his return opened the one romantic incident of his uneventful history. Miss Elizabeth Barrett, who already enjoyed a wide reputation as a poet, had recently published a volume which contained a complimentary allusion to Browning's poetry. Browning read the volume with enthusiastic admiration, and, at the instigation of a common friend, John Kenyon, expressed this admiration in a letter to Miss Barrett. The result was an animated correspondence and a growing feeling of warm friendship. Miss Barrett was a chronic invalid, confined to her room, scarcely

seeing anyone but the members of her own family; hence for some months the poets did not actually meet. At length, on May 20th, 1845, Browning saw his correspondent for the first time, "a little figure which did not rise from the sofa, pale ringletted face, great eager, wistfully pathetic eyes." The friendship rapidly ripened into passionate admiration. But to the natural issue of their attachment were great obstacles. Her father was a man of strange and selfish temper, who thought that the lives of his children should be wholly dedicated to himself, and who treated his daughter—now thirty-nine years of age—as if she were a child. To him she could not dare even to hint the possibility of marriage. More insuperable obstacle still was her own ill-health; though under the stimulus of the new interest in life, this had greatly improved, she was supposed to be labouring under an incurable disease of the spine. To incur her father's anger, to burden her lover with an invalid wife seemed to her impossible. A twelvemonth passed; in the summer of 1846, her life was represented as depending upon her spending the following winter in a warmer climate. Her father negatived any such plan. There was now a new and forcible argument in Browning's favour, and Miss Barrett at length yielded. They were married in September, 1846, and embarked for the continent. The father never forgave his daughter and henceforward persistently refused all communications with her or her husband.

This marriage, which was at once one of the most extraordinary and one of the happiest in the annals of genius, completely changed the tenor of Browning's life. During the next fifteen years his home was in Italy, and for the greater part of that time, in Florence; although, in summer especially, other parts of Italy afforded a temporary residence. Mrs. Browning's health greatly improved, and, while still frail, she could travel, enjoy the open air, and mingle, to some limited degree, with the world. In the earlier years of their married life, they saw but little of society; but subsequently they became acquainted with many English and Americans resident or travelling in Italy, and formed not a few intimate friendships, for example, with Landor, Lytton, Leighton (the painter), Fanny Kemble, among the English; and with Powers (the sculptor), Margaret Fuller Ossoli, Hawthorne, and the Storys, among Americans. In 1849 a son was born to them. In the spring of 1851, Mrs. Browning's health permitted a journey northward, and the following year-and-a-half was spent in London and Paris. They now came into close personal relations with many of their distinguished contemporaries, Carlyle, Tennyson, D. G. Rossetti, and

others. The visit was repeated in 1855, when *Men and Women* was published; this volume contains probably a larger quantity of Browning's best work than any other single publication of his. In 1851 Browning had been appreciatively reviewed by a French critic, M. Milsand, in the pages of a leading French magazine. But the indifference of the English reading public continued, now and for years to come. To this Mrs. Browning refers, some ten years later, in a letter to her husband's sister: "His treatment in England affects him, naturally, and for my part I set it down as an infamy of that public—no other word." After referring to the recognition he was finding in the United States, she continues "I don't complain for myself of an unappreciating public. *I have no reason.* But just for *that* reason, I complain more about Robert—only he does not hear me complain—to *you* I may say that the blindness, deafness, and stupidity of the English public to Robert are amazing. Of course, Milsand has heard his name—well, the contrary would have been strange. Robert is. All England can't prevent his existence, I suppose. But nobody there, except a small knot of pre-Raffaelite men, pretend to do him justice. Mr. Forster has done the best—in the press. As a sort of lion, Robert has his range in society—and—for the rest you should see Chapman's [his publisher] returns! While in America he is a power, a writer, a poet—he is read—he lives in the hearts of the people!"

One consequence of this state of things had been that the Brownings had been under the necessity of living with the strictest economy. In 1855 their finances were placed in a better condition by legacies amounting to £11,000 which came to them through the death of their old friend John Kenyon. The plan of dividing the time between London, Paris and Italy was continued until 1861. By that time Mrs. Browning's health had begun to decline; a winter spent in Rome proved unfavourable to her, and on June 29th, she suddenly expired in her husband's arms at their own home in Florence.

The blow to Browning was overwhelming. "Life must now begin anew," he wrote, "all the old cast off and the new one put on. I shall go away, break up everything, go to England, and live and work and write." As soon as possible he left Florence, never to revisit it, and, mainly from considerations in regard to his son, took up his residence in London. His manner of life again underwent a revolution. He at first lived a very isolated existence, cutting himself off wholly from general society. But, in the spring of 1863, as he told Mr. Gosse, he suddenly realized that "this mode of life was morbid and unworthy,

and, then and there, he determined to accept for the future every suitable invitation that came to him." Thus, in course of time, he came to be one of the most familiar figures in London society, and at notable public entertainments, especially of a musical character. His summers he was accustomed to spend on the coast of France. In 1864 he published *Dramatis Personæ*, a collection of poems similar in character and excellence to *Men and Women*. The tide of opinion had now begun to set decisively in his favour. In 1864 he writes to an intimate friend: "There were always a few people who had a certain opinion of my poems, but nobody cared to speak what he thought, or the things printed twenty-five years ago would not have waited so long for a good word; but at last a new set of men arrive who don't mind the conventionalities of ignoring one and seeing everything in another—Chapman [his publisher] says 'the new orders come from Oxford and Cambridge,' and all my new cultivators are young men.... As I begun, so I shall end,—taking my own course, pleasing myself or aiming at doing so, and thereby, I hope, pleasing God. As I never did otherwise, I never had any fear as to what I did going ultimately to the bad,—hence in collected editions, I always reprinted everything, smallest and greatest." His fame was fully established on the publication of the longest and one of the greatest of his poems *The Ring and the Book* in 1868-9. From this time, even the general public, although they did not read him, became aware of the fact that Tennyson was not the only great English poet living and writing. When *The Ring and the Book* was approaching completion, Browning wrote: "Booksellers are making me pretty offers for it. One sent to propose, last week, to publish it at his risk, giving me *all* the profits, and pay me the whole in advance—'for the incidental advantages of my name'—the R. B. who for six months once did not sell one copy of the poems."

In 1881 a novel honour was done him in the foundation in London of a society for the study and elucidation of his works. This example was followed far and wide both in Great Britain and in America; and the Browning cult became a temporary fashion. However feeble or foolish some of this work may have been, these Browning societies, on the whole, did much for the spreading of a genuine interest in the works of a somewhat recondite poet. Browning himself continued to be a diligent writer to the last, but none of the numerous volumes issued subsequent to 1868 reached the level which had been attained by the best of his earlier work. In his work, activity of the intellect had always tended to trespass unduly upon the sphere of the imagination,

and with the decay of imaginative power natural to old age, the purely poetic excellence of his writings began to decline, although they might still continue to possess interest as the utterances of a powerful and active mind. In 1878 Italy was revisited for the first time since his wife's death, and began to exercise its former fascination over him. He returned repeatedly and finally purchased the Palazzo Rezzonico in Venice as a residence for his son, who had become an artist. Gradually old age began to tell on the vigorous frame of the poet, but, as far as health permitted, he maintained his old interests and activities to the last, and his final volume of poems appeared on the very day of his death. This occurred in Venice on Dec. 12th, 1889.

Mr. Edmond Gosse, who knew Browning in his later years, thus sums up his personal characteristics: "In physique Robert Browning was short and thick-set, of very muscular build; his temper was ardent and optimistic; he was appreciative, sympathetic and full of curiosity; prudent in affairs and rather 'close' about money; robust, active, loud of speech, cordial in manner, gracious and conciliatory in address; but subject to sudden fits of indignation which were like thunderstorms." Hawthorne speaking of an evening spent with the Brownings in Florence, 1858, says: "Mr. Browning was very efficient in keeping up conversation with everybody, and seemed to be in all parts of the room and in every group at the same moment; a most vivid and quick-thoughted person, logical and common-sensible, as, I presume, poets generally are in their daily talk." On another occasion he says: "Browning was very genial and full of life as usual, but his conversation has the effervescent aroma which you cannot catch, even if you get the very words that seem imbued with it. . . . Browning's nonsense is of very genuine and excellent quality, the true babble and effervescence of a bright and powerful mind, and he lets it play among his friends with the faith and simplicity of a child. He must be an amiable man."

In his later years, when Browning mingled freely in society, he did not, to the casual observer, seem the poet, either in his general appearance or in his talk. He gave the impression of being a shrewd and energetic man of the world. Mr. F. G. Palgrave, whom he used frequently to visit subsequent to 1861, describes his visits as very pleasant, "but neither then nor afterwards was his conversation in any apparent near relation to his work or thought as a poet." In regard to this trait Sir Leslie Stephen writes in an essay, *The Browning Letters*, "People who met Browning occasionally accepted the common-place

doctrine that the poet and the man may be wholly different persons. Browning, that is, could talk like a brilliant man of the world, and the common-place person could infer that he did not possess the feelings which he did not care to exhibit at a dinner party. It was not difficult to discover that such a remark showed the superficiality of the observer, not the absence of the underlying qualities. These letters, at any rate, demonstrate to the dullest that the intensity of passion which makes the poet, was equally present in the man." To this passage he subjoins a note: "I happened to meet Browning at a moment of great interest to me, I knew little of him then, and had rather taken him at the valuation indicated above. He spoke a few words, showing such tenderness, insight, and sympathy, that I have never forgotten his kindness; and from that time knew him for what he was. I cannot say more; but I say so much by way of expressing my gratitude." Very weighty testimony to the charm and greatness of Browning's character is found in a private letter of Jowett's, the late Master of Balliol, dated 1868. "I thought I was getting too old to make new friends. But I believe I have made one—Mr. Browning the poet, who has been staying with me during the last few days. It is impossible to speak without enthusiasm of his open, generous nature and his great ability and knowledge. I had no idea that there was a perfectly sensible poet in the world, entirely free from vanity, jealousy, or any other littleness, and thinking no more of himself than if he were an ordinary man. His great energy is very remarkable, and his determination to make the most of the remainder of his life."

MY LAST DUCHESS.

My Last Duchess first appeared in the volume of 1842 entitled *Dramatic Lyrics*, which was the third number of the series *Bells and Pomegranates*. Originally under the general title *Italy and France*, it was associated with the poem now called *Count Gismond*: the present poem being, *I, Italy*; the other *II, France*. In *Poems by Robert Browning*, 1849, it appears (as now) independently under its present name. Perhaps the poet felt that the former title implied that the subject was not merely Italian but typically Italian, which may have been more than he intended; wishing, however, to draw attention to the local characteristics, he subjoined "Ferrara" as indicating the

scene of his imaginary situation. Ferrara is a city of Italy on the Po, the seat of the famous Este family, dukes of Ferrara. Under their influence it became a centre of art and culture, and may have been chosen here by the poet as suggesting an environment of aristocratic predominance and artistic refinement fitted to be the setting for his incidents. Byron's apostrophe in *Childe Harold*, iv., stanza 35, suggests something of this nature :

Ferrara ! in thy wide and grass-grown streets,
Whose symmetry was not for solitude,
There seems as 'twere a curse upon the seats
Of former sovereigns, and the antique brood
Of Este, which for many an age made good
Its strength within thy walls, and was of yore
Patron or tyrant, as the changing mood
Of petty power impell'd, of those who wore
The wreath which Dante's brow alone had worn before.

In exemplification, Byron, in the following stanzas, refers to the story of the poet Tasso, who, having fallen in love with the sister of the Duke, was imprisoned for many years as a madman.

The impropriety of classing this poem among the lyrics was doubtless the cause of its being placed in the final edition of Browning's works, not among the *Dramatic Lyrics* but among the *Dramatic Romances*.

My Last Duchess is an unusually condensed but typical and striking example of Browning's most characteristic mode of representing human life, already discussed,—the dramatic monologue. The fact that, in the dramatic monologue, the external details, the story, place, situation, are not directly stated but left to inference, makes it needful that the student should read the poem with the utmost care so as to catch every hint for interpretation, and fit every detail to form the background which may serve to bring into clearness the significance of the monologue itself. This is specially true in the case of this particular poem. "There is some telling touch," says Mr. Symonds, "in every line, an infinitude of cunningly careless details, instinct with suggestion, and an appearance through it all of simple artless ease, such as only the very finest art can give." Such prolonged and careful study will put the reader into a position where he may be able to appreciate the economy and the power through which what might have been a complete five-act tragedy, is flashed upon us in the compass of some fifty lines.

The poem presents the chance utterances, as it were, of the Duke, the chief actor in a story which is indicated (not narrated), as he unveils to a visitor the picture of his late Duchess. The speaker falls

musingly into a rapid survey of his relations with his wife, thereby involuntarily reveals his own character and briefly but sufficiently indicates hers. A man of commanding personality and aristocratic bearing, he possesses the external graces and refinement proper to his high position and long descent; he is, further, a virtuoso, with fine artistic sense and enjoyment of the beautiful; but these have been cultivated as a source of narrow, selfish gratification, apart from all development of the moral and spiritual nature. Accustomed to the utmost deference from all about him, proud, self-centred, and egoistic, his heart is dry as summer dust. When his personal claims, his pride, his sense of conventional propriety collide with the rights of others, he can be, perhaps half-unconsciously, more cruel and more coldly relentless than the primitive savage.

Over against him we catch a vivid glimpse of the fresh, emotional, passionate nature of the unspoiled and inexperienced girl whom, in the bloom of her youthful beauty, he marries. To his arid, cold nature, her finest qualities are an offence. A species of jealousy develops because he cannot reserve her, like the picture, all to himself,—not ordinary jealousy, but jealousy that she should have a life apart from himself, and joys which his worldly and *blasé* nature cannot feel. In the effort to shape this tender spirit into the conventional mould which his worldly artificial notions prescribe, he crushes first the happiness and next the life of his young wife. Then after a proper interval, doubtless, he seeks to fill her place and improve his financial position by another match. It is in connection with this that he shows to the envoy of a Count, for whose daughter's hand he is a suitor, the picture of his late wife—a masterly presentation, not merely of her exquisite beauty, but of that intensity of soul which looks out from her features and is her chief characteristic. This picture is the occasion of the monologue before us.

The versification should be noted. As compared with the usual structure of the pentameter couplet; the metrical peculiarities of this poem have the characteristics of Shakespeare's later as compared with his earlier use of blank verse, i.e., the treatment of the verse is dramatic. The thought is not fitted to the flow of the couplet, with pauses at the ends of the odd lines and stronger pauses at the close of the couplets. The chief pauses, in this poem, are predominantly within the lines; the sense, not the verse, dictates the grouping of the phrases, while the metrical movement, and the recurrence of the rhymes are felt as giving merely a secondary melody to the passage.

My Last Duchess. Every word in the title is significant of the Duke's point of view.

1. He draws back the veil which hides the picture of his late wife, in order that the visitor, whom he is addressing, may see it.

2-4. Note how the feelings of the connoisseur dominate; it is the lover of art who speaks, not the lover of the woman pictured.

3. **Frà Pandolf.** An imaginary artist.

5-12. The passionate soul of his beautiful wife unconsciously reveals itself through the face; in this revelation of the inner spirit, which was natural to her (as the following lines show) there is something repellant to the Duke's sense of propriety,—to that dislike for earnestness and intensity, that love for reserve and conventionality which is characteristic of worldly and fashionable life in all times and places.

6. **by design.** As interpreted by the lines which follow, this indicates that Frà Pandolf is a well-known personage, whose character would preclude any suspicion of special relations between painter and sitter. She is as *soulful* as the Duke is soulless, and all her heart came into her face on very slight occasions, as he goes on to exemplify.

9-10. Note how the words in parentheses indicate his value for the picture as a picture, and further that curious desire to keep one's sources of pleasure to oneself, even when the imparting of them would not cost anything—a trait which, in miniature, is familiar to us in selfish and spoiled children.

12-13. **not the first, etc.** Here as in ll. 1, 5, 9 and 10, we have hints, carelessly dropped, as it were, for filling in the background and action,—details of gesture and expression such as we should see with our eyes in the actual drama of the theatre.

13-15. **Sir, . . . cheek.** The first indication of that peculiar dog-in-the-manger jealousy which is a salient peculiarity of the speaker.

21. **She had, etc.** He falls into a half reverie, somewhat forgetting his auditor, and making, for his own behoof, an apology for his conduct to his wife—not that he thinks it in his heart blameworthy, but even in the most callous there is a vague uneasiness caused by a remorse, even when not importunate enough to be consciously recognized as remorse.

25-31. How admirably suggestive of the Duchess, are these touches for the imagination! This combination of reserve and suggestiveness is one great source of the spell which Browning casts over his readers.

25. **My favour.** Some gift of his—a jewel perhaps.

31, fol. The broken structure indicates the difficulty which even he feels in justifying himself. To justify one's conduct in words often reveals unsuspected possibilities of criticism.

33. The Este family was one of the oldest in Europe.

34-35. **Who'd . . . trifling?** The question seems to indicate that there is something in the expression of the person addressed which shows to the Duke, that he is not carrying his listener with him.

45. **I gave commands.** What the commands were the reader may, if he pleases, determine for himself; the idea that he ordered her to be put to death seems to the present editor wholly out of keeping with the rest of the poem. According to Professor Corson, an enquiry addressed to the poet as to what the commands were, served to show that Browning had not himself thought of the matter.

46-47. **There she . . . alive.** This brings the main body of the poem to a close: what remains throws additional light on the character of the speaker, by indicating the circumstances in which the preceding lines have been spoken.

47-48. The two leave the picture to rejoin the company down stairs.

I repeat, etc. Evidently, then, a conversation was broken off, to exhibit the picture,—a conversation in which arrangements in regard to dowry, etc., were being made with a person (to whom the whole poem is addressed) who has come to negotiate the marriage of the Duke with the daughter of a Count. All this is significant of the Duke's character.

53. **Nay, we'll go, etc.** They evidently reach the top of the staircase on their way to the "company below," and the Duke politely refuses to take the precedence which his guest, belonging of course to a lower social grade, naturally offers.

54. **Notice Neptune, etc.** As they pass the Duke draws attention to a sculptured group wrought by the famous artist, Claus of Innsbruck, with the conscious pride of the possessor of a great work of art.

Claus of Innsbruck. This is a purely imaginary personage invented by the poet. *Innsbruck* is the capital of Tyrol.

CAVALIER TUNES.

First published in No. III. of *Bells and Pomegranates*, the volume entitled *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842). The writing of his drama *Strafford*, produced in 1837, had busied the poet's mind with the scenes of the Civil War which affords the historic setting of these poems.

The appropriateness of the term *dramatic lyric* is, in the present case, specially manifest. (1) The verses with the exception of the first stanza of *Marching Along* are the utterances of an imaginary personage, and express his, not the poet's, sentiments. (2) Each poem is supposed to represent an actual speech, and is not, like *In the Valley of Caunteretz*, or *Break, break, break*, the immediate poetic expression of a feeling. Thus far, then, these pieces are akin to Antony's speech over the dead body in *Julius Caesar*, or the speeches at the Banquet in *Macbeth*; hence (3) their style has not the smooth steady flow of the ordinary lyric, but the more broken changeful movement of such poetry as is intended to represent actual speech. (4) It is not merely to embody sentiments and thoughts that these poems were written; quite as vivid and as aesthetically valuable as these, is the impression they give us of the bluff cavalier who speaks them—a typical exemplar of an historic development—and of the various situations in which the poems are supposed to be uttered.

Their *lyrical* character is stamped on the face of these poems by their metrical form, and in the fact that each gives expression to one dominating feeling. Attention need not be drawn to the vigour and dash, both in conception and in style and versification, which are specially congenial to Browning's temperament and art.

I. MARCHING ALONG.

2. **crop-headed.** Unlike the cavaliers, the Puritans wore their hair short; hence also the term "Roundheads."

swing. Hang. Cf. the ordinary imprecation "Go and be hanged."

3. **pressing.** The meaning must not be pressed; the word does not imply here (as it ordinarily does) that any *force* was used in gathering these soldiers.

5. **Marched.** In the first text "marching," as in the choruses of the next two stanzas; the change amended the grammatical structure of the sentence.

7. **Pym.** The parliamentary leader who is familiar to all students of English history, for the prominent part he took in the Petition

of Right, the Impeachments of Strafford and Laud, the Grand Remonstrance, etc. He died in 1643, not long after the outbreak of the Civil War.

8. **parles.** Conferences; the more ordinary form is "parley," though "parle" is frequent in poetry, *e.g.*, *Hamlet*, I., 1.

In an angry parle
He smote the sledded Polacks on the Ice.

13-14. **Hampden**, the famous resister of ship-money, whose noble and simple character gives him perhaps the chief place in general estimation among the statesmen of the Long Parliament. He died of a wound received in battle in June, 1643. *Hazelrig* and *Fiennes* were also prominent personages on the Parliamentary side. The former was one of the "Five Members" whom Charles attempted to arrest in Jan., 1642—an event which precipitated the resort to arms. Nathaniel Fiennes was a member of the Long Parliament, a commander of a troop of horse in Essex' army, and later attained an unpleasant notoriety by his surrender of Bristol, of which he was governor.

young Harry. Sir Henry Vane, known as "the younger" (to distinguish him from his father; so styled in the sonnet addressed to him by Milton), once Governor of Massachusetts, member of the Long Parliament, a leader among the Independents, and hence during the earlier period of Cromwell's career a close ally.

15. **Rupert.** Prince Rupert, nephew of Charles I., famous for his dashing exploits as a cavalry leader in the Civil War.

21. **Nottingham.** It was at Nottingham that Charles set up his standard (Aug. 22nd, 1642) at the beginning of hostilities against Parliament. Doubtless the reference is to this event, and hence the allusion serves to give a date to the imaginary incident of the poem.

II. GIVE A ROUSE.

Here the speaker is addressing his comrades who are drinking about him; stanza iii. shows that this speech is conceived as belonging to a much later date in the history of the Civil War than that of the previous poem.

rouse. A deep draught, as frequently in Shakespeare; *e.g.*, *Hamlet*, I., 4:

The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up spring reels;
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down, etc.

16. *Noll's*. *Noll* is a nickname for Oliver, contemptuously applied to Oliver Cromwell by his opponents.

III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

When first published this poem had the title "My Wife Gertrude."

Here, we seem to be in a still later era in the war, in a time subsequent to the battle of Naseby (1645) when, after great disasters on the field, the cavaliers were maintaining an obstinate resistance in their scattered strongholds.

5. *asleep as you'd say*. It is early in the morning and the inhabitants seem to be all asleep; but many of the king's partizans, though fearing apparently to show themselves, are listening for the departure of the cavaliers.

10. "Castle Brancepeth" is the subject and "array" the object of the verb "flouts."

Castle Brancepeth. It is not likely that the poet had any particular locality in mind; but there was and is a Castle Brancepeth a few miles from Durham, once the seat of the Nevilles, Earls of Westmoreland. It is mentioned in Wordsworth's *White Doe of Rylstone*:

Now joy for you who from the towers
Of Brancepeth look in doubt and fear.

11. *laughs*. Says with a laugh "Good fellows," etc.

14-15. *Nay! I've better*, etc. The punctuation shows that this is conceived as being said by "My wife Gertrude."

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX."

This poem was first published in No. VII. of the series of *Bells and Pomegranates*. This number was published in 1845, and was entitled *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*. "There is no sort of historical foundation about 'Good News to Ghent.' I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast [this was in 1838], after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse 'York,' then in my stable at home. It was written in pencil on the fly-leaf of Barton's *Simboli*, I remember." (From a letter of Browning to an American correspondent quoted in the *Academy* for April 2nd, 1881). Under these circumstances accuracy in local

details of the poem need not be expected ; yet the places mentioned are passed in due order as may be seen from the map. Ghent (in East Flanders) and Aix-la-Chapelle (in Rhenish Prussia) are nearly 100 miles apart on a straight line ; the route roughly indicated by the poet would be much longer. The date which follows the title points to the war in which the Dutch secured their independence of Spain. It has been conjectured that there may have been in the poet's mind some vague memory of the pacification of Ghent, which was a treaty of union between the various parts of the Low Countries against the Spaniards ; and the necessity for haste might be accounted for on the supposition that the burghers of Aix had resolved to destroy their city at a certain date unless there were some prospect of its being saved from Spanish dominion. All this is a matter of indifference. The reader has only to suppose some pressing need for tidings arriving in Aix at the earliest moment, in order to enter into the spirit of this extraordinarily animated dramatic lyric—the most widely popular (unless the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* surpass it) of all Browning's poems. The aptness of the metre for the narration of the headlong ride must be apparent to every reader.

Ghent. A city of Belgium on the Scheldt, some 30 miles north-west of Brussels.

Aix, i.e., Aix-la-Chapelle (German *Aachen*) in Rhenish Prussia.

5. postern. A small gate or door (originally a back door) ; a small gate, not the large gate of the fortified town, would be naturally opened on this occasion.

10. pique. The *Century Dictionary* gives 'peak' or 'point' as a rare meaning of this word, and quotes this passage in illustration. In Mr. Rolfe's edition there is the following note : "The pommel of the saddle. We state this on authority of an army officer, although the meaning is in none of the dictionaries."

17. On the cathedral church of St. Rombold in Mecheln (Mechlin or Malines) is a massive square tower, 300 feet high, with four dials, each 48 feet in diameter, visible from all the country round.

half-chime. The half-hour striking. It is usual in large chimes to indicate the half-hours by half the series of notes which are rung at the hours.

24. bluff. Not in the usual figurative sense, but in the more original sense, "presenting a bold, perpendicular front." The *New English Dictionary* quotes from Murchison's *Siluria* (1849), "This rock

frequently forms bluff cliffs." The word here of course belongs to "headland."

33. This line is what they will "remember at Aix."

41. *Dalhem*. "(Dalhem) lies nearly thirty miles north of Aix, and far out of sight. Besides, it is not so placed that any tower near there could be seen lit up by the morning sun, by anyone who was in sight of Aix." (F. Ryland, *Selections from Browning*, *ad loc.*)

dome-spire. In earlier English 'dome' is sometimes used in the sense of 'Cathedral' (like the German *dom*); a passage in which Addison so uses it is quoted in the *New English Dictionary*; this sense would suit the present context; but probably the poet is led to employ the word here because the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle is an octagon, terminating in a cupola, 104 feet high.

49. *buffcoat*. *Buff* is a species of leather.

holster. Case for pistols attached to the saddle.

50. *Jack-boots*. Large boots reaching above the knees. The whole costume is that of a horseman of the beginning of the 16th century made familiar to us by pictures.

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

First published in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, No. III. of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1845. In this volume there were included along with this poem and under its present title, two other poems, viz.: *Here's to Nelson's Memory*, and the poem now called *Home-Thoughts, From the Sea*. The poem is evidently an outcome of Browning's Italian journey of 1838.

The poem expresses marvellously the charm and freshness of an English spring,—a charm unparalleled, as English-speaking people at least feel, in other lands. The poet feels it the more keenly in virtue of the contrast afforded by the very different character of Italian nature—a character which is suggested, for the reader, in the single touch of the last line.

7. *chaffinch*. Mr. Burroughs says in his *Impressions of Some English Birds*: "Throughout the month of May, and probably during all the spring months, the chaffinch makes two-thirds of the music that ordinarily greets the ear as one walks or drives about the country."

10. **whitethroat.** A summer visitant in England, builds in low bushes or among weeds.

14. **thrush.** The song thrush or throistle, one of the finest of British song-birds. Wordsworth speaks of "how blithe the throistle sings"; Tennyson associates it with early spring when

The blackbirds have their wills,
The throistles too.

The English naturalist, J. G. Wood, describes its song as peculiarly rich, mellow and sustained, and as remarkable for the variety of its notes. On the other hand an American, Burroughs, says: "Next to the chaffinch in volume of song, and perhaps in some localities surpassing it, is the song thrush. . . . Its song is much after the manner of our brown thrasher, made up of vocal altitudes and poses. It is easy to translate its strain into various words or short ejaculatory sentences. . . . "Kiss her, kiss her; do it, do it; be quick, be quick; stick her to it, stick her to it; that was neat, that was neat; that will do." [N.B.—Burroughs' rendering indicates how the bird sings each song "twice over."] . . . Its performance is always animated, loud, and clear, but never, to my ear, melodious, as the poets so often have it. . . . It is a song of great strength and unbounded good cheer; it proceeds from a sound heart and merry throat." (*Some Impressions of English Birds in Fresh Fields.*)

14-16. These lines are often quoted, and afford an example of happy and melodious phrasing, not very common in Browning.

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

First published in the volume entitled *Men and Women*, 1855. Browning himself said that the poem was suggested by the [so-called] portrait of Andrea del Sarto and his wife in the Pitti Palace in Florence. His friend, John Kenyon, wished a copy of this picture and Browning, unable to procure any, wrote the poem as a substitute. The poem is based on the story of Andrea as told by Vasari in his well-known *Lives of the Painters*. The following are the main passages bearing on the poem taken from the translation of Vasari in *Bohn's Library*.

"At length then we have come, after having written the lives of many artists who have been distinguished, some for colouring, some for design, and some for invention; we have come, I say, to that of the truly excellent Andrea del Sarto, in whom all and

nature combined to show all that may be done in painting, when design, colouring, and invention unite in one and the same person. Had this master possessed a somewhat bolder and more elevated mind, had he been as much distinguished for higher qualifications as he was for genius and depth of judgment in the art he practised, he would beyond all doubt, have been without an equal. But there was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his nature, which rendered it impossible that those evidences of ardour and animation, which are proper to the more exalted character, should ever appear in him; nor did he at any time display one particle of that elevation which, could it but have been added to the advantages wherewith he was endowed, would have rendered him a truly divine painter: wherefore the works of Andrea are wanting in those ornaments of grandeur, richness, and force, which appear so conspicuously in those of many other masters. His figures are nevertheless well drawn, they are entirely free from errors, and perfect in all their proportions, and are for the most part simple and chaste."

Vasari, after describing various paintings by Andrea, proceeds:

"These various labours secured so great a name for Andrea in his native city, that among the many artists, old and young, who were then painting, he was accounted one of the best that handled pencil and colours. Our artist then found himself to be not only honoured and admired, but also in a condition, notwithstanding the really mean price that he accepted for his labours, which permitted him to render assistance to his family, while he still remained unoppressed for his own part, by those cares and anxieties which beset those who are compelled to live in poverty.

"At that time there was a most beautiful girl in the Via di San Gallo, who was married to a cap-maker, and who, though born of a poor and vicious father, carried about her as much pride and haughtiness as beauty and fascination. She delighted in trapping the hearts of men, and among others ensnared the unlucky Andrea, whose immoderate love for her soon caused him to neglect the studies demanded by his art, and in great measure to discontinue the assistance which he had given to his parents.

"Now it chanced that a sudden and grievous illness seized the husband of this woman, who rose no more from his bed, but died thereof. Without taking counsel of his friends therefore; without regard to the dignity of his art or the consideration due to his genius, and to the eminence he had attained with so much labour; without a word, in short, to any of his kindred, Andrea took this Lucrezia di Baccio del Fede, such was the name of the woman, to be his wife; her beauty appearing to him to merit thus much at his hands, and his love for her having more influence over him than the glory and honour towards which he had begun to make such hopeful advances. But when this news became known in Florence, the respect and affection which his friends had previously borne to Andrea changed to contempt and disgust, since it appeared to them that the darkness of this disgrace had obscured for a time all the glory and renown attained by his talents.

"But he destroyed his own peace as well as estranged his friends by this act, seeing that he soon became jealous, and found that he had besides fallen into the hands of an artful woman, who made him do as she pleased in all things. He abandoned his own poor father and mother, for example, and adopted the father and sisters of his wife in their stead; insomuch that all who knew the facts, mourned over him, and he soon began to be as much avoided as he had previously been sought after. His disciples still remained with him, it is true, in the hope of learning something useful, yet there was not one of them, great or small, who was not maltreated by his wife, both by evil

words and dear useful actions: none could escape her blows, but although Andrea lived in the midst of all that torment, he yet accounted it a high pleasure."

In speaking of one of Andrea's paintings he says,

"Beneath this group of two figures kneeling, one of whom, a Magdalen with most beautiful draperies, is the portrait of Andrea's wife, indeed he rarely painted the countenance of a woman in any place that he did not avail himself of the features of his wife; and if at any time he took his model from any other face, there was always a resemblance to hers in the painting, not only because he had this woman constantly before him and depicted her so frequently, but also, and what is still more, because he had her lineaments engraven on his heart; it thus happens that almost all his female heads have a certain something which recalls that of his wife.

"While Andrea was thus labouring over these works in Florence, poorly remunerated for his toils, living in wretched poverty and wholly incapable of raising himself from his depressed condition, the two pictures which he had sent into France, were obtaining much admiration from King Francis, and among the many others which had been despatched to him from Rome, Venice, and Lombardy, these had been adjudged to be by far the best. That monarch, therefore, praising them very highly, was told that he might easily prevail on Andrea to visit France, when he might enter the service of His Majesty; this proposal was exceedingly agreeable to the king, who therefore gave orders that everything needful should be done for that purpose, and that a sum of money for the expenses of the journey, should be paid to Andrea in Florence. The latter gladly set forth on his way to France accordingly, taking with him his scholar Andrea Sguazzella.

"Having in due time arrived at the French court, they were received by the monarch very amicably and with many favours, even the first day of his arrival was marked to Andrea by proofs of that magnanimous sovereign's liberality and courtesy, since he at once received not only a present of money, but the added gift of very rich and honorable vestments. He soon afterwards commenced his labours, rendering himself so acceptable to the king as well as to the whole court, and receiving so many proofs of good-will from all, that his departure from his native country soon appeared to our artist to have conducted him from the extreme of wretchedness to the summit of felicity.

"One day he received a letter, after having had many others, from Lucrezia his wife, whom he had left disconsolate for his departure, although she wanted for nothing. Andrea had even ordered a house to be built for them behind the Nunziata, giving her hopes that he might return at any moment; yet as she could not give money to her kindred and connexions, as she had previously done, she wrote with bitter complaints to Andrea, declaring that she never ceased to weep, and was in perpetual affliction at his absence; dressing all this up with sweet words, well calculated to move the heart of the luckless man, who loved her but too well, she drove the poor soul half out of his wits; above all, when he read her assurance that if he did not return speedily, he would certainly find her dead. Moved by all this, he resolved to resume his chain, and preferred a life of wretchedness with her to the ease around him, and to all the glory which his art must have secured to him. He was then so richly provided with handsome vestments by the liberality of the king and his nobles, and found himself so magnificently arrayed, that every hour seemed a thousand years to him, until he could go to show himself in his bravery to his beautiful wife. Taking the money

which the king confided to him for the purchase of pictures, statues, and other fine things, he set off therefore, having first sworn on the gospels to return in a few months. Arrived happily in Florence, he lived joyously with his wife for some time, making large presents to her father and sisters, but doing nothing for his own parents, whom he would not even see, and who at the end of a certain period, ended their lives in great poverty and misery.

"He was nevertheless determined to return to France, but the prayers and tears of his wife had more power than his own necessities, or the faith which he had pledged to the king; he remained therefore in Florence, and the French monarch was so greatly angered thereby, that for a long time after he would not look at the paintings of Florentine masters, and declared that if Andrea ever fell into his hands he would have no regard whatever to the distinction of his endowments, but would do him more harm than he had before done him good. Andrea del Sarto remained in Florence, therefore, as we have said, and from a highly eminent position he sank to the very lowest, procuring a livelihood and passing his time as he best might."

Andrea del Sarto, i.e., the Tailor's Andrew (from his father's occupation) was born about 1486, and died in 1531. He belonged to the generation that produced the finest flower of Italian pictorial art, but failed to reach such a point of excellence as is attained by Da Vinci, Michael Angelo, and Raphael. "The Italians called him *il pittore senza errori*, or 'the faultless painter.' What they meant by this must have been that, in all the technical requirements of art, in drawing, composition, handling of fresco and oils, disposition of draperies, and feeling for light and shadow, he was above criticism. As a colourist he went further and produced more beautiful effects than any Florentine before him. His silver grey harmonies and liquid blendings of cool yet lustrous hues have a charm peculiar to himself alone. We find the like nowhere else in Italy. And yet Andrea cannot take rank amongst the greatest Renaissance painters. What he lacked was precisely the most precious gift—inspiration, depth of emotion, energy of thought."—(Symond's *Renaissance in Italy*).

As in the case of *My Last Duchess*, the student should read the poem for the purpose of gathering therefrom the details as to the time, place, surroundings, and occasion of this talk of Andrea's with his wife; further, for the indications given of their past history, their relations with one another, the character of Lucrezia, of Andrea, the general trend of his thought, and the principles which the poem is intended to exhibit.

Three points of view may be noted as interesting Browning, and hence the reader, in this particular subject: the human, the artistic, the philosophical. First of all and chiefly, the poem is a delineation of

a bit of genuine human nature and appeals to the wide-spread and natural interest in men and women which is the basis of the attraction in Shakespeare's plays and in all the greatest imaginative writing. Here, we have a man and a woman depicted; we feel how true it is, how real, how vivid, how typical of human nature as we know it. (2) Browning was familiar with Andrea del Sarto's works and he found between the character and life of the man on the one hand, and his pictures on the other, a very striking harmony,—harmony in an even higher degree than is usual in literary, artistic and other products; the work is the man. The artist and his work illustrate a fundamental aesthetic principle of Browning's—that the true worth of art is in the *soul* of the picture, the loftiness, profundity, originality of the idea; that merely technical excellence, skill in embodying this conception, is of secondary importance, that a very great conception, just because of its greatness, cannot be perfectly embodied, and perfection of embodiment therefore implied limitations in the aim and excellence of a work of art. (3) Browning moreover sees in the life, character, and work of Andrea an illustration of some of the fundamental truths of life, of the present order of things. What has just been said of art, is true, in a wider sense, of life. The highest and noblest spirits ever aspire to something beyond their reach; attainment is simply a stage towards higher attainment. The best life necessarily seems imperfect, because the true end of life is not the production of some result external to man, but the development of the man himself,—the gradual elevation of the soul in its never ceasing struggle toward the infinite. This very imperfection in man is the justification of our confidence in there being such a future which may better this imperfection; it is this continual escape from imperfection that gives meaning and occupation for immortality.

This poem is one of the finest examples of Browning's genius, and has little of that harshness of expression, obscurity of meaning, and eccentricity of style which sometimes repel his readers. There is a reason why it should be so; the feeble and passive character of the speaker, and the peaceful and somewhat sentimental mood in which he speaks, are not such as to brget animated, broken, and trenchant utterance.

2. *Lucrezia*. Ar 'rea's wife; see extracts from Vasari above.

2. *bear with me for once*. The first touch to indicate the timid apologetic attitude of the uxorious husband, and indeed this is but a single aspect of his attitude towards the world in general. Whatever his faults, he is superior to her, a truer husband than she a wife, hence

we feel this yieldingness to be a mark of weakness. The student will note similar touches throughout the poem.

4. An indication of that doubt of his wife's love, and that ungratified yearning for sympathy which permeates the monologue.

6. *It's own subject.* The subject of the picture for which Lucrezia has been teasing her husband; it is this picture which has probably been the cause of the quarrel (l. 1).

10, fol. How effectively is the weariness, physical and mental, of the speaker expressed in these lines!

15. *Fiesole.* A very ancient little town that crowns one of the hills to the north of Florence, some three miles from the latter city, and one of the most picturesque objects in the distant landscape as seen from Florence.

20. Action evidently takes place between utterances of these two lines; she complies with her husband's request and they seat themselves.

23-25. This is the sort of reason, as Andrea instinctively feels, that will appeal to Lucrezia. For Lucrezia's services as a model, see extract from Vasari above.

29. *my moon.* Professor Corson quotes, to elucidate the use of this word here, the description of Cleopatra in Tennyson's *Dream of Fair Women*;

Once, like the moon, I made
The ever-shifting currents of the blood
According to my humour ebb and flow.

Perhaps, however, the main suggestion is that of roundness, see l. 26 above.

30-32. She is a self-centred beauty (one sees it in the picture), not only indifferent to her husband but incapable of strong feeling for anybody; she has no heart. In Rosamond Vincy, in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, we have a similar type. It is hinted in the poem that she is not indifferent to everybody, and thus perhaps is why she smiles,—a cynical smile which Andrea interprets as a smile of pleasure at his praise of her beauty.

34-35. See quotation from Vasari above.

36-45. Notice how Browning himself produces a 'harmony' in this passage: the mood of the speaker, the scene so effectively yet so economically suggested, and the music of the verse combining into a perfect unity. It is one of the passages that clearly refute the denial of technical excellence to Browning.

49-51. Fatalism, to which expression is given in these lines, is often the refuge of weak characters. We note it growing upon Hamlet when his active powers become paralyzed towards the close of the play: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will." We all, in our weaker moments, put the burden of our faults on circumstances, fate, etc.

54. All that's behind us. His pictures; they are sitting in his studio.

57. cartoon is, technically in art, a design on strong paper of the full size of a work to be subsequently executed on some permanent material.

59. This line is an example of the obscurity which arises from excessive condensation. The interpretation seems to be: "I venture to say that this picture is the right thing; there's a Madonna for you." The Virgin Mary is the subject of the cartoon.

60, fol. His imagination does not surpass his technical skill; hence there is no further possibility of progress in his art.

65. Praise of his work from some person of distinction.

74-5. Again her indifference to his art indicated.

79-86. This is Browning's own doctrine.

93. Morello. A mountain to the north of Florence.

97-98. An oft-quoted saying of Browning's and one of his fundamental principles. In the very imperfection of man lie his future possibilities. What need of another life, if he can get all he wants, in this?

104. He indicates a picture hanging in the room.

105. The Urbinate. Raphael Santi (1483-1520) born in Urbino in Umbria, commonly considered to have brought Italian painting to its highest excellence. The date of this imaginary talk of Andrea would be 1525. Reproductions of his pictures are familiar to all; the Frontispiece gives one of his Madonnas.

106. George Vasari (1511-1574). An Italian artist, more famous as a biographer and art critic, the author of the *Lives of the Painters* quoted in introductory remarks on this poem. He had been a pupil of Andrea's.

110-117. The drawing is defective, Andrea can do better, but the conception, the spirit, is beyond him.

120, fol. At the bottom of his heart he knows her evil and his own weakness, none the less he makes an idol of her.

130. **Agnolo.** A variant of *Angelo*. Michaelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), a Florentine like Andrea, one of the greatest of moderns both in sculpture and painting, as well as a poet of no mean order, a man of learning, an architect and military engineer.

136. Neither was married.

141. **compensates** has here the stress on the cond syllable; cp. contemplate, illustrate.

146, fol. See the extract from Vasari quoted p. 161 above.

149. **Francis.** This was Francis I., the French king who met Henry VIII. on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. He was a patron of arts and letters.

150. It was 1518-9 that Andrea was at the French court.

Note the animation of the style of the passage which tells of his life in France to correspond to the passing animation of the speaker—elsewhere so pensive and depressed.

Fontainebleau. A town on the Seine, 37 miles south-east of Paris, famous for its chateau, a favourite residence of the kings of France.

153. The historians do not usually give so flattering a description of Francis.

165. **kingly.** Perhaps punning, in a double sense.

170. **grange.** A barn; this is the more original meaning of the word; the sense "farmhouse" is secondary.

173-4. The reward of my highest achievement was to have been you; what does it matter if the reward came before the achievement?

177-9. Andrea imagines some critic giving utterance to these lines as he compares the pictures.

179. Referring again to the fact that his wife was the model for the Madonnas and other female figures in his paintings.

184-93. This story is not an invention of the poet, but based upon an actual anecdote, true or not.

197. **rub it out.** The chalk outline of the arm which he had drawn on the picture.

199-200. An example of the way in which Browning indicates the influence of the auditor on a monologue by imputing a question. The question is very significant of Lucrezia's utter indifference or utter

ignorance about art. For her husband's chief interest she has, as indicated throughout the poem, neither understanding nor care.

203. **And you smile indeed!** A more genuine smile than that of line 33 above.

206-7. Note the pathetic despair of the husband as to getting his wife to understand any except the most material motives.

209. **Morello's gone.** The distant mountain is no longer visible in the growing dusk.

210. "**Chiu**" is the Italian name for the owl.

220. **Cousin.** Really some gallant of Lucrezia's.

221. **Those loans?** Lucrezia has been successful in coaxing Andrea to give money for the supposed financial straits of the "cousin." Another trait of Andrea's weakness.

226. **I'll pay my fancy.** I'll use my money to gratify my whims,—i.e., in this case to win the smiles of Lucrezia's.

228. **Idle, you call it.** In keeping with what we have already seen of her, she cannot understand.

232. **that is, Michel Agnolo.** Because in comparison with his judgment the opinions of the rest of the world count for nothing.

241. **scudi.** A *scudo* is worth about a crown, or dollar.

245, fol. This feeble condoning of the past, and the attempt to put upon circumstances, the responsibility for his own defects is of a piece with the whole character of Andrea as exhibited in the poem. The genuine remorse of ll. 214-218, as his animation of 151-165, is but a passing mood; he has not sufficient strength of character for genuine repentance.

257. **Yes, etc.** Lucrezia makes a movement to leave him.

259. **What would one have?** This again is an imputed question, either suggested by her expression, or perhaps actually put by Lucrezia in her impatience with what would seem, to her, her husband's senseless maunderings.

261, fol. Indicates (as lines 97-9 above) what, in Browning's opinion, is at once the purpose and the promise of a future existence—the further development of the soul, is deficiencies of this sphere made good in another.

261-2. See Rev. xxi., 15-16: "And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the walls

thereof. And the city lieth four square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed."

263. **Leonard.** Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), another great Florentine painter, sculptor, architect and engineer. His most famous painting is very familiar in reproductions, the Last Supper, painted on a convent wall in Milan.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

First appeared in *Men and Women*, 1855. Like *My Last Duchess*, it is a study of the Italian aristocracy. The loss of political freedom, as well as of commercial prosperity from the 16th century onward deprived the higher classes in Italy, more particularly the aristocracy, of the natural outlet for their activities in public affairs. The consequent narrowness and triviality of their lives had its effect upon character. An intellectual and spiritual dry-rot set in. Instead of the great statesmen, preachers, scholars, artists of an earlier date, we have the *virtuosi*; the highest ideal attained was a dilettante curiosity and superficial taste. Seriousness and depth vanished. In the familiar characterization of Italy in his *Traveller*, Goldsmith gives a sketch of this condition of things:

Yet still the loss of wealth is here supplied
By arts, the splendid wrecks of former pride;
From these the feeble heart and long-fall'n mind
An easy compensation seem to find.
Here may be seen, in bloodless pomp array'd,
The pasteboard triumph and the cavalcade,
Processions form'd for piety and love,
A mistress or a saint in every grove.
By sports like these are all their cares beguil'd;
The sports of children satisfy the child.
Each nobler aim, repress'd by long control,
Now sinks at last, or feebly mans the soul;
While low delights, succeeding fast behind,
In happier meanness occupy the mind.

Browning likes to bring out character and principles by collision with some trivial event or fact, to show the soul revealing itself in its attitude towards the little, no less than towards the great. So, in the present poem, we have a delightful bit of humorous self-revelation on the part of an Italian person of quality, in his feeling with regard to country and city life respectively,—“a masterpiece of irony and of

description." We note the pervading humour, the genial ease, the dramatic vivacity of the style, the appropriate and changeful movement of the verses, the very brief yet efficient sketches of scenes in Italian city and country.

1. Even the enforced economies of the Italian person of quality are characteristic of the class he represents.

4. by **Bacchus**. *Per Bacco* is a common Italian exclamation.

10. **my own**. Supply "skull" from line 8.

11, fol. The limitations of his aesthetic nature are shown in what he admires

18-25. In these exquisite suggestions of scenery there is more of Browning than of the 'Italian person of quality.'

23. **scarce risen three fingers well**. The wheat is scarcely well up to three fingers in height.

26. The fountains are frequent and very attractive features of Italian towns; every traveller is impressed by the fountains of Rome.

29. **conch**. A marine shell.

39. **diligence**. Stage-coach.

42. **Pulcinello**. A grotesque character in Italian comedy, a buffoon. *Punch*, the hump-backed fellow in the puppet-show, is a derivative.

44. **liberal thieves**. The prejudices of his class lead him to identify thieves with persons of liberal political opinions.

46. **crown and lion**. The Duke's coat-of-arms; it is needless to seek for an Italian duke with such insignia; the poet evidently does not desire that the locality of his poem should be identified with any particular place.

47, fol. Suggest the literary coteries that cultivated both prose and poetry in the days of Italian decadence. Those familiar with Milton's life will recall his intercourse with Florentine academies of this nature.

48. **Dante** (1265-1321). **Boccaccio** (1313-1375), **Petrarch** (1304-1374), are the three greatest names in Italian literature; **St. Jerome** belongs to the 4th century A.D., was the most learned and eloquent of the Fathers. This incongruous union of writers so different as the authors of the *Divine Comedy*, the *Decameron*, and the *Sonnets to Laura*, with the great Christian theologian and the Roman orator stamps sufficiently the literary pretensions of the writer of the sonnet.

50. **he**. The Rev. Don So-and-So; 'than he had ever before preached.'

51. The last four lines of the stanza give the crowning instance of the utter frivolity of mind that belongs to the speaker. Even a religious procession means nothing more to him than a bit of noise and bustle to fill the emptiness of his meaningless life and vacant mind. These lines cap the climax also of the poet's skill in treating his theme.

52. The seven swords are emblematic of the seven dolours of our Lady of Sorrow. Cf. the words of Simeon to Mary: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke ii., 35).

56. It has long been a favourite expedient for raising a municipal revenue in various cities on the continent, to tax all provisions entering the city bounds.

59, fol. The speaker inspired with enthusiasm for the pleasures he is talking of, sees in imagination [it seems to be imagination, the touches in the beginning, e.g. "yon cypress" of line 32, seem to show that he is in the country, as the state of his purse also makes probable] one of those religious processions which he so much admires, and ends his talk with a delightful outburst of regretful enthusiasm.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

First published in the volume entitled *Men and Women*, 1855. It was of course written during the poet's residence in Italy, and the description is redolent of the characteristics of certain Italian scenes where the shattered remnants of past ages (associated with the historic movement and the animation of other times) have been incorporated into her own works by the softening hand of Nature.

The poem is admirable for the way in which it expresses the quiet charm of the present scene, and the eager animation of the past; but, above all, in the way in which everything is made to contribute to the expression of the intense passion of the love story, which gathers force as the speaker proceeds and culminates in the dramatic summing up of the final line.

"*Love Among the Ruins* is constructed in a triple contrast; the endless pastures prolonged to the edge of sunset, with their infinity of calm, are

contrasted with the vast and magnificent animation of the city which once occupied the plain and the mountain slopes. The lover keeps at arm's length from his heart and brain, what yet fills them all the while, here in this placid pasture-land, is one vivid point of intensest life; here where once were the grandeur and tumult of the enormous city is that which in a moment can abolish for the lover all its stories and its shames. His eager anticipation of meeting his beloved, face to face and heart to heart, is not sung, after the manner of Burns, as a jet of unmingled joy; he delays his rapture to make its arrival more entirely rapturous; he uses his imagination to check and enhance his passion; and the poem, though not a simple cry of the heart, is entirely true as a rendering of emotion which has taken imagination into its service." (Dowden).

The versification is peculiar and gives a touch of that oddity and seeming caprice which belong to Browning; but when the reader has surmounted the initial unfamiliarity, the movement seems effective and appropriate, "beautifully adapted," as Mr. Symonds remarks, "to the tone and rhythm—the quietness and fervent meditation—of the subject."

2. Miles and miles. Adverbial modifier of "smiles."

9. its prince, etc. The relative is omitted; the clause is adjectival to "capital."

15. certain hills. Again supply the relative, "slopes which certain," etc.

17. they. The slopes of verdure.

21. These may be a reminiscence of Homer's description of Thebes in Egypt (*Iliad*, ix., 381), which had a hundred gates.

29. guessed alone. The vestiges of the city are so far obliterated that the existence of the city can only be conjectured.

39. caper. A trailing shrub which is found in Mediterranean countries, especially growing in dry places over rocks and walls.

49. The first four stanzas are introductory, we now draw towards the real theme.

63. The ruins of the various objects enumerated here form a conspicuous feature in Italian landscapes, especially the causeys, the old Roman paved roads, and aqueducts.

causeys. The older spelling (see e.g., *Paradise Lost*, x., 415); the modern form "causeway" is due to popular etymology; the word really comes from the Low Latin *calciare*, to make a road with lime or mortar.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

Published in *Men and Women* (1855), it was written in 1848, see letter quoted below. This poem is of a somewhat exceptional character among Browning's pieces: it is, on the face of it, an expression of personal feeling; the feeling—a desire for soothing and calming influence with its pathetic tone—is not common in Browning; nor is the slow and steady movement of the verse.

Fano is a town on the Adriatic, some 30 miles north of Ancona. In the church of St. Augustine there is a picture known as *L'Angelo Custode* (the Guardian Angel), by Guercino (1590-1666) which "represents an angel standing with outstretched wings beside a little child. The child is half-kneeling on a kind of pedestal, while the angel joins its hands in prayer; its gaze is directed upwards towards the sky, from which cherubs are looking down." See the photographic reproduction opposite page 57. The painting is not ranked high by the connoisseurs, but Browning and his wife were attracted by its simple pathos. Mrs. Browning writes in one of her letters (see Mrs. Orr's *Life of Browning*, p. 159): "Murray, the traitor, sent us to Fano as 'a delightful summer residence for an English family,' and we found it uninhabitable from the heat, vegetation scorched into paleness, the very air swooning in the sun, and the gloomy looks of the inhabitants sufficiently corroborative of their words that no drop of rain or dew ever falls there during the summer. . . . Yet the churches are very beautiful, and a divine picture of Guercino's is worth going all that way to see. . . . We fled from Fano after three day's, and finding ourselves cheated of our dream of summer coolness, resolved on substituting for it what the Italians call *un bel giro*. So we went to Ancona—a striking sea-city, holding up against the brown rocks and elbowing out the purple tides, beautiful to look upon. An exfoliation of the rock itself, you would call the houses that seem to grow there—so identical is the colour and character. I should like to visit Ancona again when there is a little air and shadow. We stayed a week as it was, living upon fish and cold water."

7. retrieve. Rather unusual use of the word; to bring back to a proper state; so we talk of 'retrieving one's fortunes.'

37. Alfred. Alfred Domett (1811-1887) an early friend of Browning's, himself a poet. At the time this poem was written Domett was in New Zealand, whither he migrated in 1842, and where he became a prominent public man. His departure from London to New Zealand is commemorated in Browning's poem *Waring*.

51. endured some wrong, at the hands of the critics, presumably.

55. Wairoa. A river and arm of the sea on the west-coast of the North Island of New Zealand.

 AN EPISTLE.

In section xxxi. of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, the poet touches upon the silence of the evangelist in regard to the experiences and results of that marvellous event in the history of Lazarus, his death and return again to this world of flesh and blood (see *John*, chap. xi). In the poem before us Browning ventures to conceive some of the possible results of this strange experience. He represents these results as conforming to one of his own fundamental principles, viz., that this earthly existence has its real end in exercising and developing the soul for a higher sphere beyond the gates of death; that the things for which and against which we men so earnestly struggle, have—could we see them as they really are—no intrinsic importance; but that they are made to *seem* important, in order that by eager pursuit of them we may develop and strengthen the soul,—the only thing that abides and has real worth. If this be so we might imagine that one who had penetrated the higher sphere and attained the deeper insight which belongs to it, might regard the objects which rouse the energies of ordinary men, with utter indifference; and hence his profounder knowledge might in so far unfit him for life in a lower sphere. This theory would, therefore, serve as at least a partial explanation of the purpose of God in the limitation of the powers and knowledge of man,—as a partial solution of this problem of evil, why man is encompassed with temptations and suffering on every side.

The concrete example of this theory in the case of Lazarus is the centre about which the poem gathers, but more space is given and more interest attaches to another subject interwoven with this, viz., the effect of an encounter with Christianity—its influence and its central doctrine of the incarnation—upon a learned man of the early years of our era, imbued with whatever of scientific spirit then existed. This effect is not merely local; the poet makes us feel it as typical of the fitness of Christianity to the needs of men at all periods.

Such are the abstract ideas which here, as in so many of Browning's poems, lie behind the concrete picture and give significance thereto. But the real merit of the poem lies, of course, in the concrete embodiment

of the ideas ; namely, in the lifelike fashion in which Karshish is made, through his letter, to reveal his own character ; and in the reluctant yet forcible fashion in which he betrays, notwithstanding his prejudices as a man of learning, the profound impression that his acquaintance with Christianity has made upon him.

The concrete picture is as usual to be gathered from the whole monologue ; and monologue this is, though it happens to be a written not a spoken one. Karshish is represented as a learned physician travelling to gratify his scientific curiosity and increase his professional knowledge. Of his acquisitions he gives from time to time accounts (see l. 20) to his old teacher, supposedly a great master of the learning of the time. On his travels he comes to Bethany in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem, meets with Lazarus and learns his story. Lazarus must now be an old man, for reference is made to the attack of Jerusalem by Titus, which ended in the destruction of the city, A.D. 70.

"There are few more lifelike and subtly natural narratives in Mr. Browning's poetry, few more absolutely penetrated by the finest imaginative sympathy. The scientific caution and technicality of the Arab physician, his careful attempt at a statement of the case from a purely medical point of view, his self-reproachful uneasiness at the strange interest which the man's story has caused in him—the strange credulity which he cannot keep from encroaching on his mind: all this is rendered with a matchless delicacy and accuracy of touch and interpretation. Nor can anything be finer than the representation of Lazarus after his resurrection—a representation which has significance beyond its literal sense, and points a moral often enforced by the poet,—that doubt and mystery, so frequently complained of in life and religion, are necessary concomitants of both, without which, indeed, neither religion nor life would be possible." (Symond's *Introduction to Browning*).

1. The Epistle opens in the form customary at the time ; compare openings of the Epistles in the New Testament.

3-14. These lines let us understand the point of view of Karshish ; he is not a polytheist or a materialist ; he believes in one God and in the spiritual nature of man. The special idea as to the relation between body and soul is merely such a theory as might be entertained by such a man at such a time, and the chief purpose of its introduction is to make us understand that the writer believes in the spiritual origin of man.

17-20. Notwithstanding his learning Karshish is not free from the superstitions of his time, and believes in charms, e.g., the power of stones to absorb the poison of snake-bites.

21. **My journeyings, etc.** *i.e.*, in my previous letters I brought the narrative of journeyings up to my arrival at Jericho.

28. It was the son, Titus, who besieged and captured Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He was emperor of Rome, 79-81. Vespasian his father was emperor 70-79.

29. He gives the various incidents that have befallen him; the picture of the lynx, in its startling effectiveness and brevity, is characteristic of Browning's manner.

37-8. He recognizes the humour of the method of indicating distance to which his professional enthusiasm leads him.

42. **cholera.** In its original sense 'bile.'

43. **tertiana.** Fevers which recur every *third* day.

45. **school.** School of medicine.

spider. It is not improbable that this description is based upon some account read by Browning. Perhaps it refers to the particular spider found in Palestine described in the following: "Among them [the spiders of the Holy Land] is one very extraordinary species, the Mason Spider (*Mygale Cementaria*) which excavates a home in the earth, lines it and forms a trap door with a silken hinge, which closely fits the aperture, and is constructed of webs with earth firmly imbedded in them and agglutinated. The door fits so closely and so exactly resembles the surrounding soil that detection is impossible."

48, fol. The letter is to be sent by a Syrian vagabond whom he has picked up; he dares not trust in the hands of such a person the medical recipe which he was about to impart to Abib. Ancient medicine delighted in odd drugs, powdered mummy was one. Pliny speaks of spiders powdered up with oil as an ointment for the eyes.

50. **sublimata.** A common term in elder chemistry for products resulting from heating bodies to a vapour and then allowing the vapour to condense, *e.g.*, corrosive sublimate, a chloride of mercury.

51. **ailing eye.** Diseases of the eye are very common among the poor in the East.

55. **gum-tragacanth** is obtained from thorny shrubs, natives of Asia Minor and Persia. The finest variety is known as flake-tragacanth, consisting of flakes one to three inches long by one inch in breadth.

57. **porphyry** is a name employed for various sorts of ornamental stones used in architecture, in the manufacture of vases, etc. Here the word is used for a mortar made of porphyry.

60. Like some modern medical men, he exposes himself to infection that he may the better understand the disease.

62. All that goes before reveals the character of the writer and his usual interests; but, in truth, though he is half ashamed to confess it, these interests have for the time being at least, been overwhelmed by the wonderful conception of God's relation to man revealed to him by Lazarus. The effect of this, only gradually and reluctantly manifested, does not fully come out until the concluding lines.

my Syrian. See l. 49 above.

63. my price. The fee for his medical service.

71. Karahish, conscious of culture and learning, is ashamed to have allowed his ideas to be affected from such a source, and tries to make Abib (and perhaps himself) believe that he really treats his experience with Lazarus as a trifling matter.

79, fol. He first gives what might be the scientific and rational explanation of the matter, which in his own heart he cannot accept as adequate.

82. exhibition. Used technically in medicine, in the sense of 'administration of a remedy.'

85. The evil thing. The cause of the disease, whatever it was.

91. at that vantage. The advantage afforded by the fact that this conceit (idea) was the first after the passing of the trance.

100. cf. Matthew ii., 23: "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

103. fume. "The vapour given off by acids and volatile substances; said especially of exhalations which are irritant, stifling, or the like" (*New English Dictionary*).

106. saffron. A drug derived from the flowers of a certain plant (*crocus sativus*), much used formerly both as a medicine and as a dye.

109. sanguine, in the medical sense, is applied to persons with an abundant supply of blood and vigorous circulation.

111-116. The poet chooses to represent the miraculous event of Lazarus' life as having a permanent effect upon his physical state; there is an extraordinary freshness and wholesomeness in his bodily frame.

120-242. Upon his mental and spiritual state his marvellous experience has also left permanent results. He has attained, in a measure

at least, the knowledge and insight that belongs to the higher sphere of existence into which the soul passes through the gates of death. He measures things not by the significance which they have in this earthly sphere, but by their absolute worth.

139-40. A knowledge beyond that which is permitted to man in his earthly pilgrimage, and hence a knowledge which really unfits him for life here. Just as, should a boy have the point of view of a fully developed man, but the powers and conditions of a little child, he would be unable to take an interest in the trivial employments of childhood, and hence fail to get the wholesome exercise for his activities that belongs to normal childhood and prepares for the maturer life.

149-153. Because, while the fact may seem little to Karshish, and from the standpoint of the ordinary man, one who has a deeper insight into reality, perceives that this seemingly little thing is of profound significance for eternity.

157-8. His wonder and doubt arise or as it seems to Karashiah, absurd occasions, when there is no need of them.

167-8. our lord who, etc., suggests some mysterious sage from whom both Abib and Karshish learned in their youth.

170-3. Note Karshish's superstition and his quaint astronomical theory.

174. the child referred to in line 162.

177. Greek fire. An inflammable and explosive compound of naphtha, sulphur, etc., used in war to set fire to the enemy's towns, ships, etc.; see account of the siege of Constantinople in Gibbon's history, chap. lii.

178. He. Lazarus.

179-185. This narrow life he must, of force, lead as long as the soul remains in its earthly tabernacle. Yet his abnormal insight makes him conscious of the great spiritual powers and possibilities that surround the present world, to which ordinary men are blind, and hence by which they are unaffected. But though he is conscious of spiritual life around the earthly life, his consciousness is of no avail to him, for he is under the same limitations as other men in regard to action.

186-190. He is continually impelled to act in accordance with his other-world insight, instead of moving on within the narrow possibilities and according to the limited motives which Providence has assigned to the present order of things.

195. **Admonishes.** Reminds him in what world he is living and what are its limitations.

205. **'Sayeth.** The apostrophe indicates the omission of the subject *he* (i.e., Lazarus), a common mannerism of Browning.

205-217. This quietism and inactivity are not, in Browning's opinion as we gather from his works in general, commendable tendencies in the life of man. Man's business here is to throw himself into the struggles of this life with all strenuousness that he may gain the spiritual development which this passing stage in the soul's existence is intended to give. The present passage contains the implication, therefore, that the limitations of our insight, etc., are not real evils or defects in the constitution of our universe, but needful conditions in order that objects open to us here may sufficiently stimulate all our energies.

226. **apathetic.** Void of natural feeling.

235. Lazarus has learned that his fellow-men neither have, nor can have, his insight into real truth, and that, of necessity, they must follow their own inadequate lights, and cannot benefit by his superior knowledge. This is admirably brought out by the comparison of lines 236-242. The latter passage also serves the subsidiary purpose of lighting up the character of Karshish.

250. **to the setting up.** For the purpose of the setting up of a rule and creed which Karshish professed to find monstrous and absurd.

252. **earthquake.** See Matthew xxvii., 51: "And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent."

253-5. It was thus that Abib and Karshish accounted for the earthquake.

259. **How could, etc.** Unconscious irony.

265. **leech.** Old-fashioned word for physician.

277, fol. The struggle between what had been his habitual way of looking at things, his intellectual attitude,—the attitude which would approve itself to his friend Abib, on the one hand, and the sense of illumination, of a true solution of the religious problem on the other, shows itself from this point onward. We gather that the critical attitude which is exhibited throughout the letter has been assumed; the true impression produced by Lazarus' revelations is given in the concluding paragraph.

PROSPICE.

First published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1864; appeared in the same year in *Dramatis Personæ*. We cannot be wrong in connecting this poem with the death of Mrs. Browning in 1861. "*Prospice* has all the impetuous blood and fierce lyric fire of militant manhood. It is a cry of passionate exultation and exultation in the very face of death; a war-cry of triumph over the last of foes." (*Symonds*). It may be compared with *Crossing the Bar*; the passionate fire, the energy and love of struggle are as characteristic of Browning as are the dignity, grace and perfection in the other poem are of Tennyson. It is noteworthy that the point of view in *Crossing the Bar* is easily comprehended and commends itself to the ordinary feelings of humanity; that of *Prospice* is more individual and remoter from average sympathies.

Prospice is the Latin imperative meaning 'Look forward.'

1. to feel, etc. This is in apposition to "death"; a detail of the sort of thing one fears.

9. the summit attained. The ultimate point of our earthly career.

19. life's arrears. Whatever is yet unpaid of pain, etc.
